

**COUNCIL – 22ND FEBRUARY 2017
VERBATIM**

This page is intentionally left blank

LEEDS CITY COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

Held on

Wednesday, 22nd February, 2017

At

THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
CIVIC HALL,
LEEDS

In the Chair:

THE LORD MAYOR
(COUNCILLOR G HARPER)

VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

Transcribed from the notes of
J L Harpham Ltd.,
Official Court Reporters and Media Transcribers,
Queen's Buildings, 55, Queen Street,
Sheffield, S1 2DX

VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF LEEDS CITY COUNCIL
BUDGET MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 22nd FEBRUARY 2017

THE LORD MAYOR: Welcome, everyone, to Council. Can I remind you all that the meeting is to be webcast and can you please switch off your mobile phones or put them on silent.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE LORD MAYOR: Announcements, I have got Councillor Graham Latty has been in hospital recently and is recuperating well at home. I am sure all Members will want to wish him well. Councillor Buckley, Neil Buckley, wants to say something.

COUNCILLOR BUCKLEY: Yes, thank you, Lord Mayor. I am sure that Councillor Pat Latty will take your best wishes back in person. Graham did say he was going to be watching every word and every speech on the webcam! (*laughter*) It coincides with Homes Under the Hammer and the Jeremy Kyle show, so he might not but I am sure he will be very pleased with all the best wishes.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Also, Members will be aware that the meeting is the last meeting that Councillor – Councillor! Alan Gay, our Deputy Chief Exec – I have just promoted you, Alan, or demoted you! (*laughter*). We would just like to wish him well on his well-earned retirement. We have got a number of Members who want to say a few words to mark the occasion. Councillor Blake.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. It is very strange speaking about someone when you know they are sitting two seats behind you so apologies, Alan, but I cannot turn round to acknowledge you because I will lose the microphone.

I am really privileged to stand in front of Council today to pay an enormous tribute to Alan, although do not get carried away, he is not leaving quite yet. You have still got a bit longer to go. What an appropriate meeting of Council for us to really I think all come together and celebrate the incredible commitment and work that Alan has done for us year after year after year. In fact, he has worked in Local Government for about 39 years and mostly with Leeds City Council and I have to say he still has an incredible ability to come in and be cheerful and keep us all going when we are all feeling that things are really getting incredibly tough.

Of course, in the last part of his career he has played a huge role in supporting the Leader and the Chief Exec in steering the overall strategy of the Council through the significant challenges that we have faced over the last year.

As I have said, this is the Budget meeting. It is Alan's last budget so can I just tell you, we have all been going through it with a fine-tooth comb, just making sure there is not something planted in it, Alan, that will explode in the middle of the year! I know you would not do that to us, Alan. Fingers crossed! (*laughter*)

I am steering away from football because there is a Member following me who I know will want to pay tribute to the incredible rivalry between Newcastle and Leeds, but I think it would be incredible, and I know their performance is slipping slightly, if we ended up in the play-offs together to go up into the Premiership. What a moment would that be.

We have got so much to thank Alan for. All of the work that has happened with the Combined Authority, establishing that, moving forwards into Leeds City Region and real affection, I think, from all Members in the Council.

I am going to miss your stories about the incredible travels and journeys you go on in your spare time, the little that you do have, and I am sure you will be spending a good amount of your time going off to even further flung places to enjoy your well earned retirement.

Thank you, Alan for your incredible steadfastness and experience and the calm that you have shown and helped us to stay calm in some very, very difficult circumstances. I do not think any of us could have wished to have a more dedicated 151 officer in this Council. I am delighted, Alan, on behalf of everyone here to wish you a long and happy retirement on behalf of the whole of the Labour Group. Thank you, Alan. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Keith Wakefield.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Pause while microphones are switched on)* Thank you, that's all I want to say! *(laughter)*. I am grateful to Council for giving me an opportunity to say a few words about Alan Gay because I have worked with him very closely and got to really appreciate some of his skills. I think it is 39 years because at the same time Alan walked through the door, Rod Stewart had released a record and the record was Do You Think I'm Sexy, and for an accountant that is a very difficult question to get a decent answer from.

I can honestly say without any doubt in all the years I have been in Local Government as well, I have never met or worked with a professional officer as good as Alan Gay and he has a local, regional and national reputation for being highly dependable and highly professional in his work.

I also think without any doubt that without Alan and his team – Doug and Helen and Maureen and those that are in the audience today, in the gallery today – Leeds City Council would not have been as successful or as resilient in protecting public services without his leadership. *(hear, hear)*

One of the things Members like, whatever party, about Alan is the way that he explains very complex financial information without being patronising. He has got a particular skill, it is almost Svengali like because the worst gig an officer can have in this Council is to come along on a Monday night to a Labour Group and talk about the budget, especially if the Labour Group have not eaten. You have people snarling and snapping and ready to jump on every word, and Alan has got this ability to give you the worst news in the world, doom and gloom, and we actually give him a round of applause at the end of it! *(laughter)* I always thought, if I am going to have my leg

amputated I am going to get Alan to tell me and I am going to thank him for that! It is almost Svengali.

I have always wondered, what are these officers like that are so organised and calm in their personal lives? Does he get up in the morning and talk to Kim, who is here today with their son, and get a grid reference out before they have breakfast? What is he like outside? Well, there is good news because I have had some people do some spy work for me and he is human. He has been known to turn up on holiday without his shirts. *(laughter)* He has been known to drag the family 24 hours earlier than had to be at a port in France. I know he is a human being and makes mistakes – thanks, Marcus, for that information!

One of the things I think that keeps him sane is his hobbies. He has got an incredible set of hobbies – classical, rock, Spanish guitar, recently a banjo – he may need that in retirement. He does gardening, he does cooking, and he is also a runner. Now, we all know as Members officers are not very good runners. When you look at the feeble effort the Chief Executive made in the Leeds 10k where Adam Ogilvie beat him by a country mile, you realise! Actually Alan for an officer is not bad. He did the Otley Chevin run, seven miles, in 1.07. He has done the Northern run in respectable times but, frankly, compared to Kevin Ritchie, Fiona Venner, Adam Ogilvie, Jim McKenna in his heyday, he is still second class, and David Blackburn – even David Blackburn is better, because time has not been good to David *(laughter)* but in his heyday he was a very good Marathon runner. I blame Ann! I put you in the category of first division and Alan in the second.

Of course, the Leader has already made mention of his passion of football and he still goes along, drags his son to every home game he can make in Newcastle. When I first got to be Leader, when Tom came on the scene, he taught me a song and I am not going to ask you to sing it, it is very complicated, but it is a song sung in Middlesbrough and Sunderland and outside Newcastle, and it is called Have You Ever Seen a Geordie Lift a Cup, because they have not lifted the FA Cup for 62 years. Fancy! I thought that pretty cruel so the Leader instructed me to end this cruel baiting out there.

I want to make a presentation to Alan for his loyalty, his commitment and professionalism on behalf of us. We have had a big collection in the Labour Group. If Jonathan passes me that bag I will show you. This is for you, Alan, on behalf of the Labour Group, for all of the loyalty, hard work, professionalism and commitment you have shown this Council and can I wish you on behalf of all of us a very long and happy retirement in your travels and your other hobbies as well.

If the Chief Executive would not mind doing it officially.

(The Chief Executive presented Alan Gay with a large model of the FA cup decorated with ribbons in the colours of Newcastle United)

(Standing ovation)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Andrew Carter.

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I hope Alan will forgive me if I don't dwell on the subject of football. However, he must be very pleased, somebody said a few moments ago, that they had never seen him looking stressed or upset. Two years ago when Newcastle came down he didn't look so clever! (*laughter*)

Lord Mayor, it has been for me an honour and a privilege to work with Alan over a number of years in Opposition but also as Leader of the Council. I think, as the two previous speakers have hinted, when you are Leader of the Council you realise, if you did not realise before, how professional, how dedicated Alan Gay is. He has pulled so many rabbits out of hats for this Council, not just in this past six or seven years but for this past number of years when we thought there was difficulty, financial difficulty of one sort or another. Alan and his team have been extremely professional and Keith mentioned how well respected he was outside of Leeds. He is not just well respected but highly regarded outside of Leeds by Governments, Governments of I suppose you could say three complexions, really, over the years, and he has never let this Council down.

I used to, and I think other Members do on the Executive, get quite embarrassed when we get the Treasury report because nobody usually asks any questions. Work out for yourselves why not! I decided I was going to have to at least have some sort of a grasp of Treasury management so he will have noticed that over the last number of years on occasions I ask a question on Treasury management which somebody very kindly has told me to ask because it is a mystery to most of us, but thank goodness it has never been a mystery to Alan Gay and his team and it is through their work in Treasury management that very often this Council has done a great deal better than other Local Authorities who have not had the benefit of Alan Gay at the head of the Treasury team and latterly as Deputy Chief Executive.

Like the two previous speakers I wish you a long and happy retirement. I do hope our paths will cross in the future - who knows, at a football match! You have served this Council extraordinarily well for which we should all be very grateful. Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Stewart Golton.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. All the best lines have been taken by the previous speakers, I have to say. I would like to endorse all of the comments that have been made by the current Leader, the Leader of the Opposition and, of course, Councillor Wakefield.

I can offer my own particular perspective because I have been there in administration and I have also been there as the Leader of a Group as a third party and wanting to be relevant, especially when it comes to the Budget Debate. We are quite a creative bunch as an Opposition party, but it takes a certain art for that to be managed into a proper financially sound budget amendment and one thing that I can say about Alan Gay is that he has always shown the utmost patience. He does not just generate, like some officers do, towards where the power shifts. Alan always respects the value of Opposition as well as administration and I have been the beneficiary of that.

One thing I will point out as well, people say about how happy he looks and how serene. I think it has something to do with the fact that he has actually dedicated his skills, which are significant, to public service and each day he goes into work he knows the decisions that he makes hopefully will make a better outcome for the community that he lives in. There are plenty of people in his profession who would perhaps have done a little bit of public service and then thought, “Oh, I have done my bit of good work, I will go off now and make some serious money.” Alan Gay has stuck with public service and has shown a significant commitment over the years.

I have to say, it must be quite a worthy household. It must be quite daunting for the next generation because, of course, it is not just Alan sat at the breakfast table in the morning, there is also his wife who is Chief Executive of the Leeds Teaching Hospitals Trust and you can just imagine the conversation – “If you think it’s bad your end you should try my balance sheets!”

There are a couple of people there who have chosen to go into public service and I think we are better for it as a city and I really congratulate Alan for what he achieved for this Council but also the prospect of being a kept man for a little while!
(laughter)

Well done and thank you very much, Alan. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Finnigan.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: It has been a pleasure and a privilege to work with Alan Gay and there is no doubt whatsoever about that. Whether it is the smallest issue, a query about Council Tax or the wider issues about budget amendments and other such things, he has had the patience and the good humour to make sure that those issues resolve and it is that attention to detail, no matter how small, no matter how large we would like to show our appreciation for.

It is that commitment to public service, 39 years’ commitment to public service, that is quite remarkable and that is a personal choice Alan made and that is about making the world a better place. I am sure there are alternatives in the private sector that he has resisted over these particular years, and the world, and certainly Leeds, is a better place because of his efforts and his commitment.

Indeed, every last person, the 720,000-plus people that live in the Leeds City Council area, ought to be offering their thanks and their gratitude for the work that he has put in because in these difficult times, in these austere times, Alan has found ways of making sure that he finds extra cash to support those services that we all appreciate and that we all value. Every last resident ought to be offering their thanks along with other people offering their thanks in this Chamber.

We would briefly like to touch on the football issue because I do not believe that Alan is looking over his shoulder at Leeds United’s performance at this particular point. I am sure he is much more concerned about Huddersfield Town’s progress at this particular point, and I am sure Councillor Carter would join me in saying a week

on Saturday if you want to sit between us and watch Newcastle at Huddersfield Town it would be our pleasure and privilege to make sure that that actually happens.

The bottom line is this commitment to public to service is something that is quite remarkable. Every last one of us ought to actually appreciate that and certainly from the Morley Borough Independent Group we would like to add our best wishes for a long and happy retirement and hopefully replacing Newcastle in the top two of the Championship. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor David Blackburn.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. We will not talk about Huddersfield Town while I am on my feet!

Just on the football thing, I can remember last year, you get a briefing from Alan who is really, really good, really explains it. I have learned loads over the years from him. Always the last couple of minutes, I do not know how that is with other people who get briefings, it always descends into football. I remember last year him being really depressed because they kept losing and at the last briefing they had after the end of the season, I says to him, "That's bad news, isn't it, Newcastle going down" and he said, "Well, it isn't so bad really, we might win some matches now." Well they have done!

As I say, Alan is an exceptional officer. We have had some really good officers working for this Council but I do not think anybody is like Alan. We all trust him! (*laughter*) We do, we trust him, what he says. We do not argue, he knows what he is talking about and the thing is, and it proves it, that he has rescued us all. When we were in the Coalition, I am sure he had a chest of drawers or something up in his office with a million pounds stuck in the bottom because he always seem to be pulling something out, a genie out of the lamp on Budget Day or something like that. Mind you, I do not think the bottom drawer has been large enough the last few years when we have had all these cuts though.

As I say, I do not know how he did it but the fact is, as Councillor Carter said and others have, the way he explains it, and sometimes it is very difficult for us to understand it but he explains it and we understand. An exceptional officer.

I hope you have a good retirement. The other thing is, we were discussing you at the Green Group. What are you doing when you are retiring? Are you doing any free-lance work because we will pay you to come and help us with our budget next year! Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Mark Dobson.

COUNCILLOR M DOBSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I suppose, I am just looking around the room, I might be the only person here who has worked with, although in a very junior capacity, Alan in two capacities, both as an officer and as an elected Member. I wanted to touch on that because it is important about how staff perceive people like Alan Gay.

Sometimes you hear stories, anecdotal stories about people at the top being not approachable and aloof, but actually when I worked in finance you never heard a bad word about Alan Gay and what all the staff felt were well shepherded in our task. I think that is really important what staff think about the man at the top of the pyramid. Well done on that one because it is really important. Through difficult times if you can carry your staff with you, you have really done the hard yards and won half the battle.

Yes, Alan's contribution has been immeasurable to this Council and it has been amazing. Many times in meetings over the last five years you have looked at the budget position with the budget to frame and it has looked hairy, to say the least, and all of a sudden Alan Gay will come in and he will say, "This is what we are going to do" and it makes sense in as much as you can understand, because sometimes I used to find myself hanging on to his coat tails to actually understand the technical part of what he was saying, but he always delivered the goods for Leeds and he always did so in a way that never put this Council in a position where we were over-exposed at any time. For that we should all in this Chamber, and the people of Leeds, be incredibly grateful.

It is funny how everything turns and the world turns and very recently in my day job I had a meeting up in Wetherby and I am sat with some officers talking about what I do for a living during the day, and I am looking at this rather fresh-faced young man who is here today and we got chatting. I said, "How long have you been with the Authority, mate?" and he is telling me and, "What do you do?" and I looked at the name badge and I said, "Are you owt to do with Alan?" "Yes, I'm his lad." I said without any side, "If you are half the officer to this Authority that your father was, you will go a long way and you will do this Authority proud." It is nice to see that the tradition of the Gay family is continuing amongst us.

Just finally, you cannot follow Newcastle United and not join in the bandwagon at having a slight, mild dig at Alan's club. I sometimes say to people, last time I saw Newcastle United win a cup they were in black and white and people say, "They are always in black and white, what are you on about?" No, it was in black and white, it was the Intercity Fairs Cup 1969! That is the last time I saw Newcastle actually win a trophy of merit, except the Texaco Cup, I seem to remember that one. Being a great football pundit I remember the 1974 Cup Final that was billed as Malcolm Macdonald versus Kevin Keegan, Newcastle v. Liverpool. They lost that day and I remember thinking, they are not far off winning something, so it shows what my football punditry is like (*laughter*) because we are still waiting.

I am sure you will have a wonderful retirement, well earned, and thank you on behalf of the Garforth and Swillington Independents. (*Applause*)

ITEM 1 - MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD 11th JANUARY 2017

THE LORD MAYOR: We move on to Item 1 of the Minutes of the meeting held 11th January. Councillor Ogilvie.

COUNCILLOR OGILVIE: Can I move that the Minutes be approved, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Buckley.

COUNCILLOR BUCKLEY: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: All those in favour. (*A vote was taken*) That is CARRIED.

ITEM 2 – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

THE LORD MAYOR: Declarations of Interest. Has anybody any pecuniary interest they would like to disclose that is not already disclosed? No.

ITEM 3 - COMMUNICATIONS

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 3, Communications. Chief Executive.

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: No communications, Lord Mayor.

MOTION TO SUSPEND COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES IN RESPECT OF ITEMS 10 AND 11.

THE LORD MAYOR: Motion to suspend Council Procedure Rules in respect of Items 10 and 11. Councillor Ogilvie.

COUNCILLOR OGILVIE: I move in terms of the Notice, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Buckley.

COUNCILLOR BUCKLEY: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: All those in favour? (*A vote was taken*) That is CARRIED.

ITEM 4 – REPORT ON AMENDMENTS TO THE EXECUTIVE ARRANGEMENTS

THE LORD MAYOR: Report on amendments to the Executive Arrangements, Item 4. Councillor Blake.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: I move in terms of the Notice, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Ogilvie.

COUNCILLOR OGILVIE: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: All those in favour? (*A vote was taken*) That is CARRIED.

ITEM 5 – RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD – BEST COUNCIL PLAN 2017-2018 REFRESH

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 5, Recommendations of the Executive Board – Best Council Plan 2017-2018 refresh. Councillor James Lewis.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I know the Best Council Plan is not the main item this afternoon so I will just make a couple of comments in moving it.

I think first of all this represents the priorities as we move forward through the year. We have spent quite a lot of time looking at the priorities, we have spent quite a lot of time with the Resources and Strategy Scrutiny Board chaired by Kim Groves on not just what our priorities are set at the beginning of the year but also how we look to measure them to make sure actually we are achieving them, but also then in a way that is relevant on the ground, not just a document or a spreadsheet where we look at lots of figures. I think that is where we have got to today about the priorities for the year going ahead.

I think the other thing I will say moving it is, we are given the events that are going around us regionally, nationally, internationally with things like Brexit, things like devolution, the continuing imposition of public sector austerity, actually bringing forward the refresh of the Best City Plan for 2018 just to take account of how the world is moving around us and that is covered in the report.

With those couple of remarks, Lord Mayor, I move the report.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Ogilvie to second.

COUNCILLOR OGILVIE: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Stewart Golton.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. The Best City Plan. This was supposed to be refreshed to make it more relevant and the context of that relevance was there has been a change in Local Government finances, Brexit has happened and also welfare changes.

I am not sure if making things more relevant should really be about making it less ambitious. Actually, when you are in straitened circumstances you should be more ambitious. This Council can be very good at being ambitious, as we have seen with some of the things that we are aiming for and latterly with the Capital of Culture, but in this particular document it was disappointing to see 20 priorities reduced down to eight. Out of those priorities that were de-prioritised are the ones that are the most

relevant for a lot of people. They are the ones that they think are the very basic services that their Council Tax is paying for and we should not really be downgrading them.

The Liberal Democrat Group were very disappointed to see that clean streets and road safety were taken out of that priority list, that public realm and green spaces was again relegated to secondary importance in this Best Council Plan. Perhaps most embarrassing of all, air quality stopped being a priority on its own and became the responsibility split between two separate departments. Of course, the only positive thing about Brexit is that this city has contravened EU clean air standards; if we are out of the EU then we obviously will not get chased for it but that should not be the framework for our ambition. I would like to see those priorities re-emphasised in the future. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Tom Leadley.

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: My Lord Mayor, the Best Council Plan proposals report by and large is a useful and well written document and it is held together by lots of figures, some of which are perfectly sound, others are less reliable, no more than slogans, some of many years' standing which should be edited out if we are to move forward in a properly informed way.

Leeds is claimed to be one of the fastest growing cities in the UK. In fact, it is not; as shown elsewhere in the report its population grew by 5.3% between 2005 and 2015, less than the regional average or the national average. That is how it should be, we should be going for quality of life, not quantity.

The report claims to be written in plain English despite claiming that it "references the eight cross-cutting breakthrough projects". It claims that 155,000 people in Leeds live in absolute poverty and that is unlikely and it is unhelpful because it does not define the real problem. Absolute poverty would mean living in shanty towns, dressing in rags and not having enough food. What we do have in Leeds is relative poverty, which is much more subtle and much harder to deal with. Many people are living hand to mouth without time or money to spare to let themselves or their children catch up with those who are comfortably off, so they tend to fall further behind in relative terms despite not being in absolute poverty.

There is a repetition of the common claim that Leeds is the largest city in Western Europe without a modern mass transit network. Probably no-one has bothered to check this and it is based on the size of the Metropolitan District, which is 750,000 people, rather than the relevant main urban area which is 500,000 – a number which is highly marginal for supporting self-contained mass transit. As I have said for many years, if we are to have mass transit it must have a substantial strategic purpose such as getting from Bradford to Leeds. People might not want to go from Leeds to Bradford but I am sure that plenty would want to come from Bradford to Leeds.

We need realistic and well-focused vision. Recent debate about public transport in Leeds has been more sensible than for many years but the anoraks and screwballs are still out there. Last Saturday's Yorkshire Evening Post mentioned a

proposal for a monorail from Otley to the White Rose Shopping Centre in Morley, so I am sure that will give some purpose to the Anderson's lives as they campaign against that! (*laughter*)

On page 87 of the report there is a threadbare claim that Leeds is going to meet a target of 70,000 new homes by 2028. Really that is an excursion into Walshaw World (*laughter*) which is a theme park set in 500 acres of green belt around the fringes of Leeds where you have to tread carefully as the houses spring from the ground like mushrooms without warning or reason, rather like sink holes in reverse. We need to get rid of that, we need to concentrate on the long-standing problems of the retreat of social rented housing which has been taking place for the last 40 years under various national Governments and the advance since the millennium of parasitic private landlords.

Overall the report is useful and well written but it is spoilt by a few ancient beliefs about population growth, public transport and housing numbers which, like stubborn stains, simply refuse to come out. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Right, Councillor Jonathan Bentley does not now want to speak. Councillor Ryk Downes.

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: Thank you, Lord Mayor, speaking about the Best Council Plan and picking up on the comment that Councillor Golton mentioned about reducing the number of priorities from 20 down to 8. I suppose the cynic in me would say that is only eight they have got to worry about delivering on for next year's elections, so the other twelve they do not have to worry about and it is those ones that do concern me, in particular the one that again Councillor Golton picked up on, air quality.

The fact that it is all being split now between portfolios, I think the focus is being lost. It is not just an inner city problem either. If you look at the top half dozen or so areas of concern, one of them is actually in the village that I live in, in Pool in Wharfedale. The main road there is one of the worst in Leeds. I am actually the caretaker of the Methodist Church on that main road and I can assure you we do not contribute in any way to the seriousness of pollution there.

Moving across to Otley, we are likely to have a lot more houses built there and my concern is twofold. One is we still do not have a public transport infrastructure that will enable those people to commute into Leeds etc by public transport so therefore they will continue to use cars. We need more buses, we need more public transport. To pick up on the point that Councillor Leadley made, it is absolutely right that we need a more holistic approach, we need a county-wide approach to rapid transport in the Metropolitan area. We have the centres that we can do it. If you look at Karlsruhe in Germany and that whole area you will see that that is something that they have built from one city and then expanded it out and developed a network of rapid transport. That is something we can do across West Yorkshire as a whole. That would also help to alleviate problems.

Moving back to the housing that I was talking about coming to Otley, the other issue that that brings, more transport, and I would like the planners to look at the

possibility of addressing the environmental degradation that is caused by these new houses. Developers should be made to assess their nitrous oxide particulate levels where they are developing and the communities they are developing into, and make a contribution to ensure that those levels are not increased and actually decrease. There is just not enough being done to address the air quality issue, which is a killer. I will now hand over hopefully to my colleague Councillor Lay, who will address it further. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Lay.

COUNCILLOR LAY: Thanks, Lord Mayor. Yes, a bit like my Lib Dem colleagues I shall be talking about the Best Council Plan and with particular reference to air quality.

I have to say this recent update with regard to air quality is hugely disappointing. Despite two Lib Dem White Papers and a reference back in four years, just what are we doing? Reports keep coming to Exec Board with a regularity afforded to very few other topics. Following public health and World Health Organisation criticisms in 2014, we have had three reports to Exec Board where very little seemed to change and yet we know, because the reports keep telling us both the health and financial consequences of such little action.

An average 350 people die each year in Leeds – that is one in 20 of the deaths in our city – and the economy loses anywhere between 155 and 328 million per annum. Friends of the Earth also tell us that air quality is the second biggest cause of premature death in the city. Someone dies every seven hours in the UK from asthma and Asthma UK tells us that two-thirds of sufferers report poor air quality exacerbating their asthma. I know and we know that 90% of asthma deaths are avoidable. If we did something just think how many lives we could change for ever.

We know we are one of the worst places in the UK – indeed, Europe – for air quality so it is, like I say, disappointing to see that we have downgraded improving air quality.

It is true that we are doing some small scale stuff around home efficiencies and we have introduced what appears to be an unpopular Cycle Superhighway, but where is the truly transformational vision? Things like low and ultra low emission zones, solar panels on Council and school buildings. We could set up exclusion zones around schools with no stopping and walking buses and, where possible, safe cycle routes to schools. We need a network of inter-connected cycle paths in local communities and cross and into the city. We could improve the road network to reduce congestion, vehicle idling and increase cycle use. We could stop subsidising bus companies unless they use cleaner tech, or not offer contracts to taxis until they invest faster in cleaner technologies.

With the European announcement last week threatening the UK with fines, surely now, even with Brexit, it is time we should be lobbying Central Government for the funding to do the things that I and others think we need to do to create the sea-change our communities, our city and our country needs. Thank you, Lord Mayor.
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor David Blackburn has indicated he does not wish to speak. Councillor Ann Blackburn.

COUNCILLOR A BLACKBURN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I too am speaking on the Best Council Plan, particularly in relevance to the Better Lives for People with Care and Support Needs.

As this Council knows, I have spoken before about people with dementia and the fact that we have been closing homes down and also day care centres down. Now, in the report it mentions about over the next 20 years the number of residents aged 65 to 85 is projected to increase by a third, and the number of residents aged over 85 is projected to double. The adult population with dementia is predicted to rise by 50% from just over 8,000 in 2014 to 12,000 by 2030, yet we are closing dementia homes and day centres down.

I know, yes, we are not getting money from the Government and certainly we should have, but I do have concerns that particularly with the day centres, about where these people go because we can move them round but at the end of the day people with severe dementia do not necessarily want to be shunted somewhere else and, in any case, the somewhere else can be over-subscribed with the other day centres that have closed, as I know because I have visited.

I do not know that it is better lives for people with care and support needs, certainly not with dementia. I am not saying it is all the Council's fault but I definitely think that yes, they have not closed yet but I think the way forward is to keep certainly the day centres for people with dementia because, as I have just said, we are all getting older, some of us here might end up with dementia in years to come and where are we going to go because there is going to be no day centres left for us, is there? Thank you.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Ann. Councillor Alex Sobel.

COUNCILLOR SOBEL: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am also speaking on the Best Council Plan proposals. I think the Best Council Plan updates and reinforces our long term strategic approach on tackling poverty and inequalities through a combination of strengthening the economy and doing that in a way that is compassionate, but as the Deputy Member for Sustainability and Climate Change I would like to take this opportunity to talk about work being done through the Breakthrough Project around cutting carbon and improving air quality, tackling fuel poverty, reducing carbon emissions as well as improving the air quality in the city.

We are working with partners and communities across the city to deliver various energy saving projects, making homes more efficient to improve emissions. Our own fleet has had significant improvements, including large scale conversion to electric.

Also we have put in significant funding bids for taxis and private hire for them to reduce their emissions and other clean air measure in the lead up to implementing a Clean Air Zone in Leeds by 2020 whether Brexit happens or not, or whether the

Government keeps - well, it is going to happen but whether the Government holds us to our clean air responsibilities in the EU. We are taking a more strategic approach to this rather than a de-prioritisation, as Councillor Golton suggested.

We have also secured £1.5m from the Local Growth Fund to support energy efficiency works in Holbeck as part of the Warm Well Homes project, and £280,000 for heating and insulation work has already been secured for people suffering from cold related illness. We also placed a thousand solar roofs on our own houses and on Council buildings with plans for more, but the Government reduced the feed-in tariff, precluding us doing more at present.

I take on the points Councillor Downes and others made but there are external factors here. It is not just us that has to come in, it is the Government that has to support us with our priorities around both cutting carbon and improving air quality.

Good progress has been made on our city-wide District Heating Network, the first phase of which was 2,000 flats in high rise blocks, as well as corporate buildings, taking heat from the RERF – again, something that will improve air quality in those areas.

Leeds – and this is a big transformative project – is working with Northern Gas Networks to prepare a low carbon, large-scale project to convert us from natural gas by methane to hydrogen. We would be the first city in the world to switch from natural gas to heat people's homes and replace it with hydrogen. This would reduce our emissions by 30% and significantly improve air quality in the city. We will also create 150 specialist job opportunities with a similar amount in construction.

Our long-term aim by 2050 will be to see thousands of jobs being created in low carbon technologies, not just here but in surrounding parts of the region, through implementation of this technology and its applications, making us a world leader in low carbon tech.

Becoming a low carbon city requires a significant level of partnership working, so we have also started the cross-sector Leeds Committee on Climate Change, which also is looking at air quality as part of its brief.

THE LORD MAYOR: Could you just wind up, Alex.

COUNCILLOR SOBEL: OK. The Committee is going to provide independent advice to help us create a low carbon city and improve our air quality. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Neil Dawson.

COUNCILLOR DAWSON: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. I would like to speak on the Best Council Plan, in particular one of our priority areas, Better Lives for People with Care and Support Needs, similar to Councillor Blackburn.

Helping people to be independent, live in dignity and enjoy happy, healthy and active lives is at the heart of Leeds' ambition to be a compassionate city with a strong

economy. One of our priorities is to ensure that people with care needs are given the right care at the right time and not necessarily, as Councillor Blackburn indicated, doing what we have always done in the past and keeping all the facilities we had in the past. Where people are able to be independent we will help them to get the right support and access to services that will enable them to be independent for as long as possible.

There is a section in the Best Council Plan called “What we are doing”. In the last couple of weeks rather than just read about it I actually decided to see what we were doing, so I visited a number of our facilities to see how they work and support people in this city. I went to Osmondthorpe Hub and to Holt Park Hub where there are many adults with physical disabilities, many who have suffered accidents and injuries and are having to rebuild their lives, learning to act independently and skills that many would take for granted.

I went to the Lovell Park Hub where there are around 50 separate activities every week helping people to turn round their lives. One man said to me that this place had turned around his life. He arrived three years ago, isolated, lonely – he now runs the photography group. Another man who barely engaged a couple of years ago was now tutoring an IT class on basic IT skills and has just received an offer from a major company to work in their IT department – a great success.

This is evidence that what we are doing and what we say in our plan, supporting the most vulnerable and prioritising resources for people with care and support needs, is working.

I also visited Cottingley Court, which is very near to Morley, and was impressed by the facilities we offer to those facing mental health challenges, suffering from abuse and rehabilitating from drug and alcohol misuse.

Of course, what we need to deliver the Best Council Plan is the support of our employees and I was struck at all our facilities by the commitment, the ingenuity and the resilience of our staff. They are aware of the difficult circumstances and financial challenges we have but they are optimistic, they welcome the challenge and they are focusing on providing the best support and care for those who need it now and in the future.

Therefore, I am always a bit dismayed at each Budget meeting about the number of budget amendments that focus on reducing the pay and conditions of our staff, rather than focusing on the real source of our financial problems, namely inadequate and unfair funding from this Central Government. (*hear, hear*) Our employees are doing a great job and we should support them to deliver the Best Council Plan for this city. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Jane Dowson.

COUNCILLOR DOWSON: Lord Mayor, not surprisingly I will also be speaking on the Best Council Plan refresh and, in particular, around the priority of good growth in our city and the work to reduce the skills gap which we all know exists in certain sectors.

Earlier this month Executive Board agreed proposals for the Retail and Hospitality Skills Centre of Excellence. This is a fantastic display of partnership working and something I have supported for quite some time. While Central Government continues to apply pressure on Local Authorities through seemingly never-ending financial cuts, it is fundamental that we utilise partnerships across the city to achieve our shared ambitions.

As well as having strong civic enterprise, it is important we look at what business in the city are bringing to the table. Here we are seeing a real buy-in to the growth of both the local economy and investment in the people of our city, equipping them with the right skills to succeed in the sector.

Another reason I support the creation of Retail and Hospitality Skills Centre is because my own roots are very much in hospitality, the industry in which I started off. I found my own progression route and now have a degree in Service Sector Management, so I know first hand the impact the sector can have on the wider community, but also the limited progression routes that can exist without the skills that are needed.

This Chamber will be aware of the impact both the retail and hospitality sectors are having here in Leeds, and outside London we have one of the highest retail spends in the country. Confidence in Leeds is high, encouraging major investment such as the Trinity Centre, the recent opening of Victoria Leeds and the ongoing expansion of the White Rose shopping centre.

The retail sector is already one of the largest employers in the city with accommodation and food service forecast to grow by 12% and 13% respectively over the next ten years. This is higher than the average growth rate for the rest of the city and also in the UK.

Despite this significant challenges remain. Over 25% of employers in the city report that they are facing skills gaps when it comes to their workforce. The uncertainty around Brexit is particularly serious for the sector, with a heavy representation of migrant Labour from the EU. Any decision to curtail the freedom of movement for EU nationals would undoubtedly have an impact on this sector and, more importantly, on the lives of these residents who have chosen to make Leeds their home.

Additionally, employees are struggling to gain the appropriate skills to progress in this sector. I am confident the Centre of Excellence will contribute to closing the skills gap and contribute to all of our Leeds citizens benefiting from the good growth of the city. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Barry Anderson has indicated he would like to speak.

COUNCILLOR B ANDERSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am not going to go over some of the things that Councillor Golton highlighted where some of the

things have been taken out that really should not have been taken out. What I want to talk about is the problems we see with what you have put before us.

The communication around it is, to be quite frank, as usual, diabolical. You have not explained what you are doing, you have not engaged with people, you have not engaged with elected Members. It has been lukewarm in terms of what you are doing. You have spoken to a small group of people, listened to what they have said and your vision is not shared by the people out there. The majority of the people out there would not have a clue what you are actually saying in your Best Council Plan because you are not addressing the issues that they have.

To give you an example, on page 87, yet again my favourite subject, housing. No mention at all about you are listening and you are going to be reviewing the housing target; it is still talking about we are going to go for the 70,000. Above that you talk about trying to create sustainable communities. Every time you are giving planning permission nowadays you are giving it and making communities less sustainable. There is nothing in this report at all about how you are going to address the infrastructure deficit that you are causing around this city by building houses in locations that are not going to be connected up. You make no mention as to how you are going to fund it, how you are going to use the Community Infrastructure Levy. You make no mention of how you are going to deliver the city.

Some people have mentioned Brexit; you have made no mention in here as to how you are going to rise to the occasion and turn Brexit to the advantage of this city instead of saying “Oh, no, we do not want this, we do not want that.” You have got what you have got. We have got to go forward. You should be looking forward instead of looking inward to yourselves all the time in terms of what you are doing.

What we are really saying to you is that your vision for this city is not being shared out there. The people who are the hard working people of this city that Councillor Dawson mentioned are not listening – you are not listening to them, you are not giving them what they need to develop their city the way that they would like it to be and look at the mess that you are in now, because you are not representing. Both locally and nationally you are way past it. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor James Lewis to sum up.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I think it would be an aid to Councillor Anderson, in addressing the infrastructure deficit in this city, if we did not have a National Government that poured five times as much money into London as it does in Leeds. *(hear, hear)* I think I would sum up...

COUNCILLOR B ANDERSON: You are in charge.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Yes and we are saying we want fairness in funding for transport infrastructure...

COUNCILLOR B ANDERSON: It is not just transport infrastructure.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: ...that is what we are demanding from national Government. We are in charge, saying that we are not sat here apologising, we are not sat here apologising for a Government that refuses to invest in this region properly, refuses to invest in public services, refuses to fund the Council properly, does deals with counties in the South over adult social care and does not put the resources in here. *(Applause)*

That is how we are outward looking and that is why we will stand up for people in Leeds, Barry.

Coming on to the report, I do not know who you talked to, Barry, but when I look at a Best Council Plan that talks about getting people back into work, getting people into jobs, getting people in houses and things like that, that is what we hear out in our communities and that is what we are aiming to deliver, and I think that for me is part of where we are taking it forward.

I look at Councillor Golton's comments about ambition. We can always play the numbers game. If we had had 20 indicators no doubt Councillor Golton would have stood up and said "You are not prioritising enough, you should have had..." It is part of that game of Opposition, it is what we have come to expect from the Liberal Democrats – old problems, no answers.

I turn to Councillor Leadley's comments. If people want to travel from Leeds to Bradford they have got two railways they can do that on so I am sure Councillor Wakefield can give you a timetable for it. *(laughter)*

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: Not if you want to call in somewhere along the way.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: There are two separate railways, one of which we have just opened two new stations to help people access the trains more easily.

There was a serious point you made about the definition of absolute poverty. It is a statistic. I know quite often when Governments can try and change the goalposts around poverty. It is a nationally recognised definition of households that earn 60% or below of the national average. That is why we have used that language in here and I think that is an important one we need to talk about. When we look at the impact of changes we make and we look at the impact of changes nationally, I think it is important to have some of these benchmark figures – rather than playing with words actually get on with tackling the problems. That is what this report is about and I recommend it to Council. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Can we move to the vote? *(A vote was taken)* That is CARRIED.

ITEM 6 – RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD – AIRE VALLEY LEEDS AREA ACTION PLAN

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 6, Recommendations of the Executive Board, Aire Valley Leeds Area Action Plan. Councillor Richard Lewis.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I move in terms of the Notice.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Ogilvie.

COUNCILLOR OGILVIE: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: All those in favour. (*A vote was taken*) That is CARRIED.

ITEM 7 – RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
– CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 7, Recommendations of the General Purposes Committee – Constitutional Arrangements (*sic*). Councillor Judith Blake.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Move in terms of the Notice, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Adam Ogilvie.

COUNCILLOR OGILVIE: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: All those in favour. (*A vote was taken*) That is CARRIED.

ITEM 8 – RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND
AUDIT COMMITTEE – PROCUREMENT OF EXTERNAL AUDITOR

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 8, Recommendations of the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee – Procurement and External Auditor. Councillor Adam Ogilvie – sorry, wrong one – Councillor Paulene Grahame.

COUNCILLOR P GRAHAME: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I love Adam but I do not want to look like him, thank you! (*laughter*)

Lord Mayor, I am speaking on Item 8, page 213, Option 3. Lord Mayor, it gives me great pleasure to move the recommendations from Corporate Governance and Audit Committee that this Authority joins the LGA established sector-led body for the appointment of external auditors following the close of the 2017/18 accounts.

External audit provides one of the important sources of assurance for Members as to how the Council's governance arrangements are operating. However, this assurance must be cost-effective and demonstrate value for money. The sector-led procurement provides an opportunity for the in excess of £200,000 savings

already secured with the assistance of my committee to be consolidated and hopefully improved upon.

I am sure you will be aware that the accountants we are using at the moment is KPMG. Councillor Carter, if you remember when the Corporate Governance and Audit Board was formed and we had the previous Chair John Bale, who is no longer with us, and other Members, and KPMG used to come there with like a little army and they would not answer questions, only on what they wanted to do, and come to life when it was time for their invoice to be coming to us.

Councillor Lowe, Alison, can you remember when you were on Governance and Audit and we kept questioning the invoice and the amounts and we wanted it itemising, much to the annoyance of the Chair then (who I will not name and I am sure we all know) and eventually we got a refund and a discount on their accounts.

I think KPMG have given a good service but it is time to change. In the past year we have had a different approach from them where they have been more open in what they are expecting and telling us to do as a Council, so I think it is time to move forward and work as we should be with the joint services and other councils.

I am just going to take this opportunity, because I do not think that the support of the officers of Corporate Governance and Audit give – we have Tim up in the gallery and Andy is in Amsterdam – I do not think they get the credit that is due to them.

I hope that Council will support our proposal of Option 3. KPMG I can take them or leave them and we will be working with them again I am sure at some time. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Adam Ogilvie.

COUNCILLOR OGILVIE: Second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: All those in favour. (*A vote was taken*) That is CARRIED.

ITEM 9 – REPORT ON APPOINTMENTS

THE LORD MAYOR: Report on appointments. Councillor Ogilvie.

COUNCILLOR OGILVIE: I move in terms of the Notice, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Neil Buckley.

COUNCILLOR BUCKLEY: I second that, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: All those in favour please show. (*A vote was taken*) that is CARRIED.

ITEM 10 – BUDGET MOTION

THE LORD MAYOR: Right, item 10, Budget, which is on page 9 of the Order Paper.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: I move the first part of the Motion in terms of the Notice on the Order Paper, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: I am just reminding people that at the conclusion of the Budget debate recorded votes will be taken on all amendments and then the Budget motion. Councillor Blake to move it. Can we call for the vote on the amendment. (*A vote was taken*) CARRIED. Councillor Judith Blake to move.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Lord Mayor, thank you. It gives me great pleasure to move the Budget for 2017/18 this afternoon. I am sorry our young audience from the Muslim Youth Council have just had to leave us, so they have missed the Budget speech that I think they came for, but I am very pleased to see their interest in the business of the city.

We can all be incredibly proud of our city. Despite seven years of Tory-led Governments failing to deliver the strong economic recovery we were promised, Leeds has bucked the trend. Contrary to what we have just heard we have proved ourselves enterprising, innovative and resilient. We have developed strong partnerships across the region which are helping us to deliver a strong and ambitious agenda.

Our economy is growing. There are more opportunities for our young people and we continue to prioritise the needs of our most vulnerable residents. There is no doubt we still have huge challenges. Persistent inequalities blight many of our communities, not everyone is able to access the opportunities created by our growing economy and we have yet to see the transformational benefits of much needed investment in our transport infrastructure. However, I have every confidence that, given the opportunity and the right tools, we can take the action we need to secure sustainable long-term growth and a bright future for those living here.

Regardless of our promising progress locally, there is no escaping the fact that I am presenting this year's budget amidst a backdrop of huge pressure across all public services. After six years of Osborne's austerity, followed by a Government consumed by Brexit, a number of Councils are warning that they are close to bankruptcy. Thankfully, Leeds is not one of those but all Authorities are under huge strain from the toxic combination of Tory funding cuts and soaring demands for services.

Local Government is not alone in feeling the strain. Our prisons are in crisis with increases in violence and suicides; the NHS, as we see unfolding on our television screens every day, has not got the funding, the beds or the staff it needs to meet demand, and our under-funded social care system is buckling.

The cost of public policy failure is phenomenal, about £37bn amongst Core cities alone. Worse than that is the impact on the life chances of young people in our communities. Youth Services have been a real victim of Government cuts. I think nationally £400m has been taken out of our Youth Services and a loss of 4,000 officers. That is why we will be joining other Local Authorities to lobby Government to make youth work statutory.

Those most reliant on public services are the ones feeling the brunt of the Government's failure. The Prime Minister has promised no new benefit cuts this Parliament but existing and planned cuts will continue to fuel inequality. The ongoing freeze in benefit levels until 2020 is leaving the poorest in our communities struggling to meet the rising costs of basics such as food and energy. By 2020/21 600,000 more children will be living in poverty. That is shameful and it is Local Authorities like us that are picking up the pieces.

Finally, seven years into austerity, Tory Councils have broken ranks and they too are shining a light on what deep cuts mean for services. Can you imagine a situation where the Conservative Leader of the LGA, Lord Porter, said just last November:

“Even if Councils stop filling in potholes, maintaining parks, closed all Children's Centres, libraries, museums, leisure centres and turned off every street light, they will not have saved enough money to plug the financial black hole they face by 2020.”

This may have fallen on deaf Ministerial ears but the threat of Tory-dominated Surrey County Council holding a referendum on a 15% Council Tax hike finally caught their attention. Perhaps not such a surprise as the county includes the constituencies of the Chancellor, the Health Secretary and the Transport Secretary. How unfortunate for the Leader of Surrey County Council that he has more than one Nick in his mobile phone address book and how fortunate for all of us that he happened to send a messages to DCLG to the wrong Nick. (*laughter*) It just happened to be the Nick who is the Labour Leader of the LGA nationally. You couldn't make it up! Certainly from the response the Ministers have suddenly hatched a plan to give Surrey special funding for social care. Well, surprise, surprise. Certainly these mates rates were enough for him to withdraw his referendum threat.

The King's Fund believes in two years there will be a £2.8bn gap between demand for social care and Local Authority resources to pay for it. Public spending on social care will be less than one per cent of GDP at that point. Well, if sweetheart deals are good enough for Surrey they are good enough for Leeds. (*Applause*) If Ministers are prepared to pay for care in Tory Authorities, they need to do that across the country, regardless of political affiliation. We have seen before County Councils, often the richest Councils, given extra funding by their Tory colleagues at the expense of urban Authorities like Leeds. That cannot be repeated. The stakes are too high.

After years of national under-investment in public services, the question in Leeds is how do we respond? The answer is to remain ambitious for the city and ambitious about the Council's role in the city. We continue to work towards our Best

City and Best Council ambitions. We want ours to be a compassionate city built on a strong economy. As a Council we need to be more efficient and enterprising to get there. Tackling poverty, reducing inequalities is the thread that links all of our work. However you measure poverty it is scandalous. A fifth of children in this city are living in poverty and of those 70% are from working households.

For me it is important that we now pursue policies that deliver more inclusive growth. More people need to share the benefits of economic success. To fully realise that ambition, devolution must become a reality. That said, we are not standing still. We are doing what we can to tackle the root causes of poverty. Let me give you two practical examples.

Firstly, we are leading by example in tackling low pay. Over 80,000 jobs in the City of Leeds pay less than the real living wage of £8.25 an hour. Many of these jobs are part-time, insecure, zero hour contracts. I am proud to say that we are increasing our own minimum pay, benefiting almost 8,000 low paid staff on the Council, leading by example. *(Applause)*

Do not forget that when people become caught in the trap of low pay and low skills, it creates costs for the public sector too. If we could halve the number of people in in-work poverty in Leeds City Region we will save the taxpayer £60m a year. We want to use our influence to pursue those savings.

Secondly, we are changing people's lives in some of our most disadvantaged communities. Our agenda for growth must support places hit hardest by austerity and left behind by economic recovery. We have committed to a rolling programme of interventions, building on the work to transform neighbourhoods such as Cross Green and Little London. We are investing £4.5m in part of Holbeck. This is one of the most deprived areas in England but less than a mile away from our city centre. It is also right next to where Burberry are planning to invest. Our money will be used to improve housing and the quality of the neighbourhood.

It is not just about bricks and mortar. We need to focus on supporting people in their communities. Our efforts must help people gain skills and access jobs. We are also targeting health and family support where they are needed most. Despite Government cuts to public health, we know that preventative services work.

One of the best examples of that is in youth offending. A young person showing behavioural problems at the age of five, dealt with through the criminal justice system, will cost the taxpayer a staggering £207,000 by the time they are 16. Alternative approaches, focused on behaviour change, improved life chances, cost just £47,000 and that would save us £113m a year if just one in ten young offenders could be diverted away towards more effective support.

The devolved powers we have secured so far and the development of the Northern Powerhouse have started to give us the levers we need to address some persistent regional imbalances. I do, though, want to now see a firm commitment for both these principles from Theresa May. So far that commitment seems to have disappeared as fast as her Government's intention to deliver a budget surplus.

What Theresa May has committed to do is build a shared society and protect families that are just about managing, but those sound like hollow promises when choices made by this Government and its predecessors are fuelling inequality.

I said there is an extra 600,000 children will be living in poverty by 2020/21. A third of this increase is entirely due to the Government decision to limit tax credits and universal credits to the first two children in a household.

I visited one of our food banks last week. They are dealing with this crisis first hand and it is working people who are finding themselves there, like the recently separated young single dad with three kids, arriving in December, embarrassed at not being able to provide food for his family, let alone Christmas presents. It is people who have been tipped over into poverty by tax credit cuts, zero hours contracts and low wages.

According to the Resolution Foundation, this Parliament will be the worst for living standards for the poorest half of households since records began. It will be the worst since the early years of Thatcher for inequality.

The Prime Minister has inherited policies that will hit low and middle incomes with kids the hardest. She can change that. She can help us deliver more inclusive growth, she can make sure the benefits of growth are shared more equally so that those jammed families do not feel the strain.

If she is not prepared to take those decisions, then I urge her to give us the power to do it ourselves. Here in Leeds we want to pursue the right sort of economic growth. We want to deliver more good quality employment and to invest in our communities. We just need the tools to get on and deliver.

Before I continue, I want to pay again tribute to Alan Gay and all of his Finance Team for their hard work in preparing what is a very challenging budget. In recent years they have examined every accounting option available to ensure we maximise our resources and avoid cuts to services. For that, and I hope from everyone in the Chamber, Members are extremely grateful. I also want to thank Tom and the Corporate Leadership Team for their efforts to guide this organisation and its staff through very unsettling times. Our trade union partners should be recognised for their support in delivering a new shape for the organisation and its staff. Opposition attacks on trade union convenors in the amendments are as short-sighted as they are predictable. (*hear, hear*)

I would like to thank our staff. We understand many of you are feeling the strain as capacity reduces, but you continue to work hard to deliver better outcomes for the people of Leeds. Last but not least I want to put on record my thanks to all Members for the wide range of roles you commit your time and energy to. Your work to champion your communities, scrutinise decision making, participate in planning and licensing decisions and driving forward policy is invaluable. I particularly want to thank Councillor James Lewis for the work that he has done to put into what is a very difficult budget.

Colleagues, I find myself in an unprecedented position. Normally the final budget figures are announced at the end of January or the first few days of February. However due, we are told, to the distractions of Brexit, final figures for the Local Government Finance Settlement has still not been finalised. The Department did at least release figures to us late on Monday night but the Parliamentary vote is only taking place today. What a shambles, and what an ominous sign of things to come as Brexit negotiations intensify. Local services, partner organisations, rely on our funding. We have soaring demand for public services and after seven years of Tory cuts the decisions we are making are becoming harder and harder. What is more, unlike our colleagues in Whitehall, we have to balance our books.

It underlines the importance of pushing forward our devolution agenda. Local Authorities need to be able to get on and deliver the changes the communities need without being shackled by a Government descending into chaos.

Can all of you remember a letter to the Leader of Oxfordshire County Council from the then Prime Minister, David Cameron, in 2015? It revealed his staggering ignorance of the impact of his own Government's 40% cut to Local Government funding. His successor seems no more concerned about local services. Core funding for Councils continues to be decimated. After her Herculean effort to respond to billions of pounds being taken out of the system, Local Government discovered that the Revenue Support Grant will be cut by a further £2.2bn in 2017/18 – that is a further 30% cut. Between 2010 and this year core funding in Leeds has been slashed by a massive £214m, 47% of our funding. We will see a further £53m of reduction over the next four years. Reductions will be front-loaded which means we will see a reduction of £25m in 2017/18.

These budget reductions come alongside rising costs and huge increases in demand. The combination of funding reductions and demand pressures in 2017/18 alone is £81.8m and nearly £33m relates to Adults' and Children's Services alone.

Let us not forget that cuts have not been shared equally. Poorer Councils, those most dependent on Government grants, have had to cut local services by up to nine times as the much more affluent areas in the last seven years. The Institute for Fiscal Studies has compared the spending cuts of 45% and 44% in Salford and South Tyneside with the 6% and 5% cuts in Surrey and Hampshire. We know in Leeds the cuts County Councils are now complaining about are the ones that Metropolitan Authorities like ours have been dealing with for over six years.

This Government's lack of fair play when it comes to Council funding is a worrying starting point as Local Business Rates Retention progresses. We are fortunate in Leeds as our economy continues to grow. We have had the fastest rate of private sector jobs growth of any United Kingdom city in recent years, yet that economic growth has not translated into business rates growth. In fact, business rates income has declined since 2014/15. That is because the Business Rates Retention Scheme exposes the Council to huge risk.

Most successful appeals are currently backdated to April 2010 – and I am looking at Councillor Ron Grahame here as he raises this issue all the time – vastly increasing cash losses by nearly six times in the current financial year. Since 2013/14

the cost of appeals in Leeds has reached a staggering £137m. We have further provision in our budget for £22.5m in the year ahead. A re-evaluation exercise will address this but the figures involved show how precarious the system can be when flaws are not righted quickly.

Of course, the greatest scandal within the Local Government settlement is the lack of funding for Adult Social Care. Ahead of the Autumn Statement, with a growing crisis in health and social care, we waited with bated breath for the Government's big idea. We were met with deafening silence and denial. Not a single mention of the NHS or Adult Social Care in the Autumn Statement delivered to the House of Commons. Did the Prime Minister and her team honestly think they could ignore the biggest public service crisis for decades? Well, yes, I think they did but, you know, they have rightly been shamed into action but the fudge they have come up with is not enough and it is not new money.

Let's be clear about what is on offer. Firstly, we can bring cash into the Council more quickly by raising a 3% precept this year instead of 2%, but the total we can raise across three years remains 6%. What is more, there is a question of fairness here. The precept shifts the burden of funding social care to local taxpayers and many areas with the greatest need have the lowest Council tax bases. The King's Fund calculated the precept allows wealthier Councils to raise three times as much as poorer areas.

The funding is also nowhere near enough. In Leeds a 3% precept will raise just over £8m. Our Adult Social Care services face pressures of £15m in 2017/18 just to stand still.

There is a second element to the package. Ministers have reduced the income Councils can expect from the New Homes Bonus. To be absolutely clear, their big idea is to take money away from Councils so they can give it back to us with a new name – not exactly fair or inspirational. You might also remember that funding for the New Homes Bonus was originally top sliced from Local Government in the first place, only for it to be redistributed benefiting areas with the highest housing growth and weighted in favour of properties with higher Council Tax bands, mainly the south-east.

It is outrageous that the likes of the Communities Secretary are continuing to claim they are pumping £900m of new money into the system. They are not. Ministers are robbing Peter to pay Paul. For Leeds this is not even a financially neutral move. We had expected to receive almost £19m under the New Homes Bonus calculation next year. These proposals reduce that to £14.5m. £3.3m of the lost income will come back to us as Sajid Javid's Adult Social Care Grant but that still leaves Leeds £1.2m worst off. I ask you.

In the absence of any national policy we are doing what we can in Leeds. We are putting an extra £11m into Adult and Children's Services. That means 66% of funding in the 2017/18 budget will support Adult Social Care and Children's Services.

The focus of today is looking forward to 2017/18. However, the proposals in the budget are only possible because of the progress we have made this year. Despite the challenging context, there have been some real highlights in 2016/17. In fact, it has been an award winning year for Leeds. Named as the best place in Britain for quality of life; named as the best city life in the What Uni awards; and fifth for University of the Year; LGC Children's Services of the Year 2015; the Migrant Access Programme won a Euro Cities Participation award; and the real recognition, Local Authority of the Year at the MJ Awards event. (*Applause*)

We also had a summer of Olympic successes. A tremendous Rio saw 14 medals from Yorkshire including five gold. Paralympic athletes hit the heights with 12 medals. Pride in Leeds extends beyond those medal wins. We are proud that our city offers world class training facilities across sports from diving to gymnastics to triathlon. Imagine what it must feel like for a young person in Leeds to know they are plunging into the same water as the likes of Jack Laugher and Chris Mears in our very own Council facility of John Charles Stadium.

Looking back on the Council achievements from 2016/17 there has been a clear shift in the way we do business. Many of our successes are down to a much more innovative, enterprising way of working. We are being much more commercial about how we use our assets. For example, investment in Tropical World has boosted visitor numbers by 45%, income was up 112% in the first trading year post-development. We have proved we can create a more sustainable future for our visitor attractions and deliver savings that can support other services.

How many of you visited the new Lotherton Hall Christmas Experience? That event alone increased income by a staggering £200,000 above what we would normally have expected to raise during that period. 2017/18 will see us build on these successes with investment at Temple Newsam, Lotherton Hall and Tropical World.

Collectively these venues attract ten million visits a year from Leeds residents alone. They attract 670,000 admissions to the fee-paying attractions. We aim to increase that to 820,000 by 2020/21. Investing in these assets, boosting income, will deliver a net saving of £765,000 a year by 2020/21, which can help support our much needed services.

Our focus in Health and Wellbeing and Adults has continued to be on preventative action. We have successfully secured £3.3m from Leeds South and East CCG to fund an enhanced Best Start Offer for disadvantaged families with babies under two years. We have delivered the No Thanks I'm Pregnant alcohol campaign and have delivered a pathway for bereavement support for children and young people.

Our Neighbourhood Networks have supported 219,000 older people in Leeds. They have helped avoid 1,450 hospital admissions and supported 617 discharges. An expanded in-house reablement service is now offering support seven days a week to help people recover from illness and injury.

An innovative approach to technology enabled Leeds to become the first place in the country to have a single care and health record. This approach is now being replicated nationally. We continue to get national recognition for both our work on

suicide prevention and falls prevention. The fantastic Time to Shine programme of activities is helping to tackle loneliness.

The cutting edge strategies adopted by Children's and Families mean Leeds is nationally recognised as a sector leader. We are the only Core City to be rated as "Good" overall by Ofsted and only one of eight Authorities to be rated as "Outstanding" for leadership, management and governance. Leeds is one of a select group of ten Local Authorities who have been asked by the Department for Education to be a partner in practice. We have also been asked by the Department for Education to be an Improvement Partner for Manchester and we have just learned that Children's Services have secured an additional £9.6m from the Partners in Practice programme – well done to everyone involved, much needed support (*Applause*) and this will help us support our current restorative approach. The number of children in care in Leeds has been safely reduced by 15.5% in the six years following 2010. That equates to a saving of £6.9m and better outcomes for children across the city.

COUNCILLOR: Absolutely brilliant.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: There was a 8.6 rise nationally in the same period. If Leeds had followed the national trend we would be having to spend an additional £11m. Our Families First Initiative continues to help avoid higher costs, saving an average of £3,000 per family a year.

An ambitious approach within Regeneration, Transport and Planning saw Victoria Gate open, bringing a thousand new employment opportunities. Looking to the future the scheme will deliver business rates that could total £4.8m with 50% of this being retained by the Council. Leeds Kirkgate Market has been named as Britain's favourite market, even while the work is continuing. New traders are arriving and the footfall has increased.

We have responded proactively to the decision to cancel NGT. This year's engagement with local stakeholders has been hugely positive. A significant deal has been agreed with First to provide 284 new state of the art buses which will reduce nitrogen oxide emissions by 87%. We have completed the extension of Elland Road Park and Ride so it has 800 spaces with 700 spaces filled most weekdays. More Park and Ride are now planned.

Officers in Employment, Skills and Opportunity have supported 300 businesses with their recruitment and skills training. We have provided over a thousand adult learning courses at over 200 venues, supporting 6,300 residents. The Head Start programme was extended to offer tailored support, training and work experience for young people identified as NEET, with a focus on those leaving care. We have supported over 3,500 local residents into work; support is increasingly targeted to those in receipt of Council Tax Support and those with mental health issues. 80% of those supported live in our most disadvantaged communities.

The Communities portfolio has taken the Community Hub programme from strength to strength. We are providing accessible, integrated services where they need to be - at the heart of the community. Five new hubs opened this year, two more will follow in 2017/18.

A much more joined-up approach to tackling domestic violence has been established via the Front Door Safeguarding Hub. Partners are working more closely together. Every school is now informed when a child has been present at an incident and GPs are notified of domestic violence concerns for victims.

The private rented sector has had national recognition for the development of the Leeds Rental Standard. We are also tackling the worst landlords with the worst stock through the Rogue Landlord Unit. The number of long-term empty properties in the city is at its lowest ever level. The number of properties empty for more than six months has reduced by over 2,000 in the last four years. We have the lowest number of temporary accommodation placements ever, despite huge demand, and in Leeds we have no-one in bed and breakfast accommodation. This is in massive contrast to comparable Authorities.

The Council is delivering its largest programme of new build Council housing for over 30 years. We are also investing millions in our existing homes to improve standards. Environment and Sustainability secured £1.5m from the Local Growth Fund to support energy efficiency works in Holbeck. Over 4,000 customers have joined the White Rose Energy Scheme since its launch. The Council has tendered for the delivery of a District Heating System linking the Energy from Waste Plant to the city centre and many of our own multi-storey flats. We have secured funding with Northern Gas Networks to build a compressed natural gas fuel station to supply our refuse fleet. The project offers the prospect of huge reductions in carbon emissions and would place us at the heart of a cutting edge new industry.

The refuse collection service is providing a record level of reliability. There were only 44 missed bins per 100,000 in December 2016. Leeds Bin App was developed and launched via a Data Mill hack at very low cost. Over 7,000 households have now downloaded it.

The Energy From Waste Plant became fully operational in March 2016, delivering £7m-worth of annual savings, huge environmental benefits and electricity generation.

In Resources and Strategy, Civic Flavour have expanded their commercial activities, providing evening catering at Leeds Town Hall. The Resilience and Emergencies Team has developed improved communication tools and over a thousand business have registered with the Leeds Alert System. Business Rate collection rates are even better than last year at 97.8%. ICT Services have been providing to West Yorkshire Joint Services for the last twelve months.

There were 3.7 million visits to our leisure centres during 2016 and 10,238 swimming lessons per week – that is an increase by 8% on the previous year. New disability swimming sessions have been launched.

Staff within Economy and Culture have once again ensured that the profile of our city has been raised and opportunities to secure inward investment have been maximised. This is vital work, especially as we back the city's bid to become European Capital of Culture 2023. Aside of the social side of our cultural offer, the

economic impact should not be under-estimated. The ITU World Triathlon attracted crowds of over 80,000 and elite races were broadcast from Leeds in more than 20 countries. It is estimated that a million people in the UK saw Ali and Jonny Brownlee claim first and second place in their home city.

Light Night 2016 was another resounding success, with 65 events in more than 40 venues. The audience of 80,000 spent an estimated £2m in the city over that period.

COUNCILLOR: Well done, Adam.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Single-handedly! The West Indian Carnival had an economic impact of £4.7m and attracted 160,000 visitors. We are all looking forward to the 50th Anniversary celebrations this year, the oldest carnival in Europe.
(Applause)

The Leeds International Concert Season remains the largest Local Authority music programme in the United Kingdom. September's Beer Festival was the most successful to date, with over 10,000 people attending.

COUNCILLOR: Well done, Graham!

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Generating over £100,000 in income, and we know our vibrant city culture is attractive to investors such as John Lewis and Burberry. Our core funding of 51 cultural organisations also enabled them to leverage in a further £51m.

The Economic Development Team continues to support a wide range of investment outcomes. This includes £5.1bn-worth of schemes currently in the development pipeline; the £695m of schemes under construction. They are working with partners at a time when office construction is at its highest level since 2007 and we have had the highest number of new residential starts in nine years.

The 2017/18 budget builds on the successes of recent years, delivers efficiencies in response to huge challenges without losing sight of our ambitions for Leeds. It sets out an ongoing programme of organisational change. We will build on an approach which has delivered efficiencies including a 50% reduction in agency staff since 2013; £35m savings in procurement since 2010/11; £4m savings via our asset review; £60m saved per annum from workforce reductions; our staffing numbers have reduced by 3,200 since 2010 with no compulsory redundancies. *(Applause)*

We will continue to take an innovative approach to demand management and we remain committed to a whole city approach to stimulating good economic growth. We will look at ways we can work differently to support vulnerable residents. This will include extending in-house specialist dementia day services and launching a new partnership model for BME day services. A massive £30m of Housing Growth funding has been set aside to support the delivery of much needed extra care housing. This will provide much needed supported living for older people to help them live independently like the wonderful new facility we are opening in Yeadon later this week.

We will boost recycling and work towards becoming a greener city. This will include converting our refuse vehicles to compressed natural gas and working with Third Sector partners to increase re-use and recycling. We are currently looking to pilot schemes in Morley and inner city tower blocks to drive up recycling further.

We will pursue plans to double the size of the city centre via the transformation of the South Bank. This has the potential to create 35,000 new jobs, 4,000 homes and new green space.

Thanks to cross-party lobbying, we have the opportunity to invest £173.5m of funding in much needed transport improvements, including an ambition to double bus patronage, improve local services and reduce air pollution. This money needs to lever in further funding from the private sector who, of course, will benefit from increased demand.

We are prioritising our most vulnerable citizens, putting an extra £11m in Adult Social Care and Children's Services - as I have said, making up 67% of our budget. We are giving our young people the best start in life, keeping every one of our Children's Centres open. *(Applause)*

We will continue to push for a better deal on flooding. Our local ambition, to strengthen the resilience of businesses and communities, will not stop but we need a fair deal from Government to make sure our city gets the protection it needs from flooding.

Growing inequality and the fallout from Brexit is impacting all our communities, so we know it must be Local Authorities that drive efforts to improve community resilience. We will bring a fresh approach to locality working in our most challenging neighbourhoods extending, as I have said, our Community Hubs programme with two new hubs opening at Dewsbury Road and North Seacroft. This programme and our work with partners such as FareShare and Leeds Credit Union will help us to support residents during the continue roll out of Universal Credit.

Universal Credit will be hardest for those who need it most. Some families will go without income for six weeks or more...

COUNCILLOR: Diabolical

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: ...before their first payment. A number of people on disability benefits will be entitled to much less. Both DWP and DCLG have acknowledged that Universal Credit will be difficult for providers of specialist accommodation such as refuges for women fleeing domestic violence and providers of homelessness shelters. This will include providers who offer support for those with mental health or addiction issues. In reality, the Council will deal with the fallout from this difficult transition.

We are working hard to strengthen partnerships in the city to get the most out of joint resources and I am delighted to announce that, following discussions with the

Police and Crime Commissioner, he has agreed to pick up the full cost of PCSOs in the city worth over £1m. *(Applause)*

The further good news is that the police are well on with their recruitment exercise to fill empty PCSO posts and expect it to be at full strength in the next couple of months. Crucially, this agreement ensures that the Council's other community safety commitments such as tackling anti-social behaviour, monitoring CCTV and dealing with domestic violence, can continue unaffected.

This year Scrutiny has played a more important role than ever in shaping the budget. They have challenged us to be even more enterprising and innovating. They have explored new ways of working and identified new ways to raise income. Increasing income will, of course, help support valuable public services. Scrutiny gave very careful consideration to proposed changes to existing fees and charging. That has helped us to shape our final proposals.

Some changes affect car parking charges. Members on the Opposition Benches may not like it but rather than amend our budget, they would do better to direct their fire at Ministers who continue to decimate Council funding. *(Applause)*

The modest charges we are proposing include increases of £1 in charges for Sunday and evening car parking and the introduction of a charge for city centre parking for Bank Holidays. On-street parking tariffs will increase by ten pence. In total these changes will generate £380,000 in additional income. Increasing the charge for parking at Woodhouse Lane multi-storey from £6.50 to £7 will bring in a further £120,000.

I am approaching the budget for 2017/18 under no illusions about the scale of the challenges ahead but I am confident that we are taking the right decisions for Leeds. It is this administration pumping £11m extra into Adult and Children's Social Services when Government is failing to address our care crisis. It is this administration fighting to keep all of our Children's Centres open. It is this administration protecting front line workers and raising the wages of low paid staff. We are finding innovative ways to deliver massive savings without compulsory redundancies. Yes, it is hard and no, we cannot do all we would like to do when core funding continues to be slashed, but there is one thing I know about Leeds and that is that we are a city that will always fight back.

Government policies are plunging people deeper and deeper into poverty while Ministers muse about the UK becoming a tax haven for wealthy companies. In contrast, here in Leeds tackling poverty and reducing inequality is at the heart of what we do. We are expanding Community Hubs, providing accessible integrated services and we are investing in preventative policies that tackle the root causes of poverty.

We are strengthening communities and I can announce today that every single ward in the city will have the chance to benefit from a new £5m fund to improve district centres and local amenities. This can support projects in your wards to encourage regeneration, stimulate growth. Building on the success of former programmes we are delivering investment where Members tell us it is needed most. *(Applause)*

We are leading the way in restorative Children's Services, supporting families and reducing costs. We will continue to innovate, we will pursue good economic growth with our partners and support people into work. This administration will not abandon families fighting to keep their heads above water. We will not abandon elderly residents who need specialist services. We are delivering on our ambition to be a strong economy but our determination to do that as a compassionate city sets us apart.

Our funding has been decimated, our national Government is in disarray but locally our ambition has not diminished one bit. (*hear, hear*) We will keep fighting for this city and we will do everything in our power to give the people who live here the opportunity to share in the benefits of a strong, successful Leeds.

Colleagues, I commend this Budget to the Chamber. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor James Lewis.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: I second and reserve the right to speak.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Andrew Carter.

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. We have talked about rabbits out of hats a little earlier when talking about Alan Gay. It is amazing when it is too late how people can also produce rabbits out of hats.

Can I begin by thanking the rest of the team in the Finance Department and, indeed, officers in various departments of the Council, for the briefings they have given my colleagues and myself in preparing our budget amendment. I would also like to thank my colleagues who have been heavily involved in the preparation of this budget amendment and the proposals we are going to put before Council.

With apologise to Oscar Wilde I will, if I may, misquote him: "To have one Councillor defect may be regarded as a misfortune (*laughter*); to lose two looks like carelessness; to lose three, or maybe four by now, it is catastrophic."

My Lord Mayor, it would be churlish, would it not, if I did not welcome our newest Group Leader to the Council Chamber, Councillor Mark Dobson. (*Applause*) I look forward to hearing his first budget speech, and I hope it is one of many.

I do not know about other Members of the Council but we seem to be getting emails like confetti informing us of defections from the Labour Group. That is a fact and it is in stark contrast to what we have just heard, as usual, from Councillor Blake. The last one – well, it was the last one when I came into the Chamber, it might not be now – was really interesting because it informed us of another defection from the Labour Group and at the bottom in capitals it said, "Tropical World has evolved. (*laughter*) New environments and animals like never before."

My Lord Mayor, I would have thought Tropical World is probably the wrong comparison – Jurassic Park would be a better comparison for the state of the Labour Group at the moment where the political dinosaurs are devouring each other.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: (*inaudible*)

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: Talking of which, there we have one! (*laughter*) Sorry if you missed that, Michael, I will not repeat it – they all heard it.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: It's a pity you don't hear it.

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: My Lord Mayor, let us move on. We can come back to all this later.

COUNCILLOR COUPAR: Get back to the Budget Councillor Carter.

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: This is quite clearly going to be one of the most difficult years for the Council in terms of its finances and I for one do not pretend otherwise.

It is essential, therefore, that we ensure that we meet the budget in its totality as it is set out – I am talking about the figure, not the contents. We are now moving into a period when we have some certainty, some relative certainty about funding, and although that remains very challenging, at least it enables some more forward planning to be carried out and I think we should all welcome that.

Councillor Blake as usual has been highly selective with her figures, dwelling on headline figures rather than net spending on the services that we actually provide for our citizens. Indeed, she could teach Donald Trump a thing or two about alternative facts.

The net spending by this Council on the services we provided for our citizens in 2010/11 was £564.2m. That was the actual amount of money we spent on services for the people of this city. The projected net budget for the coming year is £492.6m - I grant you still a substantial reduction, but nothing like the headline figure that Councillor Blake quotes of over £200m. What matters to the people of Leeds is what the Council actually spends on delivering the services that it is supposed to deliver.

It is quite amazing that six out of the last seven years, bearing in mind this current year is not yet available, this Council, the Labour administration under so-called austerity and cuts, under spent its budget by £17m. Members of the public I am sure would wonder what sort of Council administration it is that perpetually says it has not got enough money and then under spends by so many millions of pounds over a relatively few years.

The simple fact is that the amount we are going to spend on Council services in this coming year is down by £3.7m, less than one per cent of the budget, and that is a fact.

Usually, Lord Mayor, when the Labour Leader introduces the Budget we are all treated to their attempt at humour by telling the rest of us how the Labour Group are having a sweepstake on how long the speech will be. I notice they are not having one this year.

COUNCILLORS: We are!

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: Well, so are we! So are we!

COUNCILLOR: It is a tradition, Andrew, it has got to be maintained!

COUNCILLOR GABRIEL: Try and get your facts right for a change, Andrew.

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: We are having a sweepstake on how many of you will be left on those Benches by the end of the day. It would appear, Lord Mayor, that not only have their party nationally lost any pretence of either being an Opposition or a national party with their yearly leadership contest, but it would now appear that the same thing has beset the Labour Group here. We have the spectacle of a Labour Council Leader apparently draining support and her administration coming apart at the seams.

Tomorrow we have Parliamentary by-elections and just to emphasise to you the state that the once great Labour Party is in, their Parliamentary candidate at the Copeland by-election has said, and I quote, "It is political madness to vote for Corbyn."

COUNCILLOR GABRIEL: What has this got to do with the Budget?

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: Their candidate in Stoke-on-Trent was tweeting, "If we have to prefix Owen Smith with 'Pfizer lobbyist', can we also prefix Corbyn 'IRA supporting friend of Hamas politician'. My Lord Mayor, it makes Councillor Dobson's comments appear relatively mild when he says: "However, I am increasingly uncomfortable with the direction and leadership of Leeds Labour Group." My Lord Mayor, it would appear a number of other Labour Councillors feel precisely the same.

Last year I highlighted the disparity and unfairness of the Revenue Support Grant as it is allocated between major cities. It is something that we all, I hope, agree on. What has this Council done since that time to engage with Government about those disparities? I suspect nothing at all. Instead, we have Councillor Blake continually banging on about the grant reduction. What she fails to tell us, of course, even when she talks about the New Homes Bonus very disparagingly, is that the New Homes Bonus will deliver over £74m to this Council in the coming financial year and that since 2010 we have had £585m in capital grants from this Government and its predecessor to enable us to invest in the infrastructure and future of this city.

She finally concedes the £173m which this Government (which apparently completely ignores Leeds) is giving to this Council when this Council failed totally to win an appeal on a 21st Century public transport system for this city. The

Government could have walked away and said, “No, hang on, it is local responsibility, Leeds. You and the Combined Authority have loused up. You have lost the inquiry; why are you coming to us for the money we were going to give you if you had won?” Instead of that, they have given us the money, or are about to.

I am very pleased, however, that for once when it comes to staffing Councillor Blake has accepted that actually it is pretty good news for everybody when we make significant staff savings that we do not make people redundant. In fact, I think the whole Council should be pretty pleased with that, that 3,000 jobs have not gone. That is the part where I disagree with her when she tries to imply at the beginning that we have thrown people out of work willy-nilly. We have done nothing of the sort, and nor should we. In fact, 3,000 people have left the employment of the city by taking voluntary redundancy after doing a lifetime’s service to this Council and to the citizens of Leeds.

What does concern me, however, is that Councillor Blake paints this pessimistic view of the national economy and then tries to paint a rosy view of the Leeds economy. If the situation nationally was as you paint it, then this city would not be being successful. We do not operate in a little world of our own, even if you do. We rely on the success of a national economy and this country is projected to have the highest growth rate of any economy in the Western world at 2%, with most financial organisations, including the Bank of England, revising upwards the growth figure. We have more people in full-time employment and part-time employment since records began and in January we had the biggest budget surplus since the same time in 2008 when your recession started so, Judith, when you go on about these statistics use the real facts and not the selective ones.

COUNCILLOR COUPAR: Was that just in Leeds?

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: Let me return for a moment to the issue of funding for the Revenue Support Grant. Once again Judith Blake compares Leeds City Council with a variety of - in particular, Surrey County Council. Just for the record, the people of Surrey receive from the Government £228 per head of population. We receive £492 per head of population.

I go back to what I said last year, something I thought that we had all agreed on, that Leeds has historically received a bad deal from Governments of three different persuasions now, but it is a bad deal compared with other cities around the North and the Midlands.

Once again, I will give you the statistics: Birmingham gets £704 a head; Liverpool £739; Manchester £711; Newcastle £598; Nottingham £843; and Bradford £575. If we had the same funding per head as Bradford we would be £13m a year better off. That is what we should be going to Government about – how it is that when you compare apples with apples we still get a bad deal, and that is a fact.
(Applause)

When we are talking about discrepancies in funding, don’t let us ever forget that it is Governments of all persuasions that have not treated Leeds fairly. In 2007/08 the Gordon Brown Government introduced the Working Neighbourhoods

Fund. In its final year, 2010/11, Newcastle got £8m; Liverpool £29m; Manchester £26m; Bradford £12m; Birmingham £34m; and Leeds got nothing, and that was under Gordon Brown's Labour Government, so accept the facts as they are, Judith, do not change them for your own purposes and your own story.

We have said before, and I will say it again, if you want to go to Government and make a case why we should be treated better in comparison with similar Authorities, Metropolitan Authorities, we will be there with you.

To move on to the amendments, because we accept that the financial situation is extremely tight in total we are proposing to re-allocate about £15m-worth of spending - £3.4m in revenue, £11.5m in capital.

£6.5m of the capital is achieved by re-phasing the capital programme and an extra £5m of borrowing, the repayments for which are funded in our revenue savings. The revenue savings we set out actually amount to just over £2m, the reason being that £750,000 is simply a transfer of the budget from the centre to Community Committees. The rest is achieved as follows.

We want as soon as possible in the financial year to increase planning fees by the maximum of 20% which has recently been discussed by the Government. If someone applies for a planning application, the fact that planning fees are 20% higher will not deter them at all and it will give us the chance to significantly improve all aspects of the Planning Service so it responds to the needs of the people and elected Members. I want to add in here that at the last Council meeting we brought up the issue of brown bins and whether or not we could use as planning gain from a new development a contribution to finance the first few years of a brown bin service on a new development.

I am not prepared to accept it is not possible. I think that with the right Planning Department, with the right officers in place and with a robust team of officers negotiating with developers, we can get some real planning gain from developments for our communities and at a time when we are seeing the sort of housing figures that you are talking about, that is going to become more and more essential.

We want to delegate the Housing Advisory Panel budget and the Community Centre budgets to Community Committees with the Housing Advisory Panel budget obviously being ringfenced as it has to be spent on Council estates. We want to rationalise the bin collection routes. Seven routes were identified. The administration has gone for six; we would take the seventh.

We would look at withdrawing double overtime payments and replacing them with time-and-a-half and we would look at an increment freeze on PO grades and above for one year. We would reduce the revenue spending on back office ICT and the cost of trade union convenors. Yes, we would. At a time of austerity the trade unions are sitting on millions and millions of pounds and they should pay for their own services. They cannot on the one hand complain about shortage of money and take it with the other.

Further significant savings could be made, in our view, in two other areas, in ICT and in procurement, but we have not sought to add any savings in those areas to our budget amendments, the reason being that they are areas where substantial pieces of work are ongoing through Scrutiny. I too want to pay tribute to Scrutiny, particularly to the Scrutiny Committee, I think, chaired by Councillor Groves that is looking at procurement and savings in procurement. They believe, and I believe, that we can continue to make significant savings in procurement. In identifying those we will be able to add significantly to the reserves of the Council, which we need to.

My Group remains concerned that the level of reserves the Council holds in what could be described as a £2bn social enterprise, Leeds City Council. We are now down to about £18m; compare that with schools in Leeds that are sitting on balances of £28m; the Police Authority sitting on balances of £120m. No wonder they agreed to fund the PCSOs. That is an absolute scandal that the Police Commissioner is sitting on balances of £120m, and the Fire Services on balances of £24m.

We seek to put a minimum of half a million pounds back into reserves. If the savings forthcoming in procurement and ICT are identified and implemented, this should further bolster reserves significantly.

I warned last year that I did not think the Children's Services budget was sustainable, not least because of pressures brought about by continuing unacceptably high levels of migration, but we accept that when it comes to safeguarding young people and protecting them, money has to be found and the Authority this year has prioritised the investment and we entirely support that. However, it continues to allocate income generated by the LEA which simply is never forthcoming so, if you like, the budget presented by Councillor Blake has an inbuilt flaw, a fundamental fault in it. This is not acceptable when every other department of the Council has to be asked to find additional savings because one department does not meet its budget and that is another reason to ensure reserves are bolstered.

The Council needs to accept the fact that the Government has made it clear, whether you like it or you do not, that ESG is being reduced year on year and the Council cannot continue to put fanciful trading figures in the budget which are then not achieved.

Moving on, we are allocating £250,000 of the savings we have identified to provide a further brown bin service to an additional 45,000 properties. It is not acceptable that we are not doing this. I think it is a service now that should be rolled out across the whole city.

Councillor Blake talked quite a lot about Neighbourhood Networks and I want to do exactly the same. We want to invest a further £500,000 in Neighbourhood Networks. These Networks in this city are doing a magnificent job. They could do even more. They help keep older people in their own homes for longer, they combat isolation. Alongside that, we need the Council to review its Better Lives Strategy and we have allocated £1.5m of capital alongside the £500,000 to invest in Neighbourhood Networks. We want to look at the way partnership working is operating. We need to have a meaningful dialogue and a meaningful partnership with

the voluntary sector and the private sector if we are to improve the provision for elderly care.

It seems to us that the Better Lives Strategy has a fatal flaw in it. It makes a presumption that the Council should completely disengage from the provision of care for the elderly. It should not. We need forward thinking, a progressive strategy with the private and voluntary sectors where we are partners and if that means sharing the provision of accommodation, that is what it means.

We also need to look at that joint approach when it comes to providing more extra care housing which Councillor Blake has mentioned but we are not doing enough. It may mean more money and more capital. It makes no more sense for the Council to come out of provision of care altogether than it did when the Council wanted to provide all the care itself. There needs to be a mixed economy in this respect and that is why the Better Lives Strategy needs to be reviewed in this context.

Community Committees. In our amendment we are proposing to reinstate the £180,000 cut in the Wellbeing Fund. To be frank, Lord Mayor, to continue year after year salami slicing Community Committee budgets indicates one thing and one thing only – that whatever she might say, the current Labour Leadership does not support devolved working to Community Committees. With this latest cut they have reduced the Wellbeing budgets to the point where there is little or no leeway where local Members at ward level and Community Committee level can put in place new local initiatives in response to need.

On the one hand Councillor Blake goes on about centralised decision making in the UK and in England in particular, and demands devolution from the Government but yet when it comes to devolution here, from the Executive Board on the political side and senior officers on the administration side, to locally based Community Committees, she completely undermines her own arguments.

To make matters worse they then pass over and ringfence the money for Youth Service provision, and promptly ensure the centre bids for all the money and, again, leaves local Area Committees, local ward Members with no room to manoeuvre, no room to locally prioritise and it is not acceptable if we really believe that the Community Committees in this city are doing a good job.

To be frank, Councillor Blake, you are treating the Members who serve on Community Committees like errant children who cannot be trusted to do the shopping in case they run off with the change.

Can I also remind Members that it must now be 18 months ago that I challenged Councillor Blake in the Executive Board on the Youth funding and ringfencing policies and the constraints it placed upon Community Committees. I was promised it was being looked at and a report was coming to the Executive Board to deal with these issues. Nothing has happened. Where is the report? Nowhere to be seen.

We should show confidence in the Community Committees and in ward Members of all parties so we would restore the £180,000 cut, we would remove the

ringfence on Youth funding, we would transfer Community Centre funding, which is in the amendment, to Area Committees. We would scrap the Housing Advisory Panels and transfer that £450,000 to the Area Committees.

We do believe that Community Committees can play a very real role in relieving pressure on the centre and quite frankly ward Members in whatever party they represent should know better than the centre how to provide and respond to local services.

We have two other amendments as regards the capital programme. Despite the fact the controlling Labour Group has increased the capital programme over the years, they have cut back on repair and maintenance to roads and footpaths. In 2010 we had reached the stage where the backlog of highway maintenance had been addressed, and for the first time in almost 20 years we were keeping pace with highway repairs. The Labour administration, despite spending more on capital, has decided to disinvest in the highway network and the result of that is very simple – more claims against the Council for damage to motor vehicles and injuries to individuals, a deteriorating road and footpath network, and it has to be addressed. We would inject £5m into the capital programme for that purpose.

We would also set up a capital grant or loan scheme to support and encourage small and medium sized house builders to build on our priority regeneration sites. This is a direct response to the Government's new White Paper on Housing and we would want to go to the Government and ask them to match any money we put in with money of their own. Indeed, I would go even further than that and say if the Government were prepared to match it then we would look to put even more money in because we finally get those brown field sites all across the city that we have all long awaited, redevelopment into the housing market with people on lower incomes being able to afford to buy those properties, or rent them, without building on green belt or green field sites.

My Lord Mayor, in conclusion can I say this budget is obviously very tight, therefore the amendment and, indeed, it is reflected in the other amendments today, have to take that into account and show moderation and care which we have tried to do and outline here. Our emphasis would be on empowering Community Committees, setting up a real partnership with the voluntary and private sector to improve care for the elderly, to make a planning system work for people rather than politicians and planners, show our commitment to rolling out the brown bin services – oh and I forgot, yes, and reverse the parking charge increases because you have reached a stage where you will find the income not increasing but decreasing. You have gone to the well too often and if that happens – and it has happened before – then what you will find is a very detrimental effect on the economy of the city.

We also believe that by the capital investment we have indicated we can bring forward initiatives to improve front line services and the infrastructure and highway network.

My Lord Mayor, the Labour administration led by Councillor Blake, whatever she says, has not got the message she tried to put across across to the people of Leeds.

As my colleague said earlier, the people we represent do not get that message, do not believe that message at all.

You have failed the people of Leeds in Adult Social Care. Look at the shambles of consultation of only a few months ago, the disgraceful treatment of residents and their relatives.

You have failed the people of Leeds by allowing the roads and footpaths to fall into a chaotic state of disrepair, whilst investing in all sorts of other schemes that happened to suit you.

You have failed the people of Leeds by completely ignoring 50,000 residents' comments on the Site Allocations Plan and by sticking for three years to your 70,000 housing target when we called on your three years ago to implement a review immediately the Core Strategy was adopted.

You have failed the people of Leeds on devolution, whether it is devolution to the City Region where, quite frankly, you have played such a devious game with your colleagues that you have thoroughly sickened off Government Ministers by the way in which you misinterpret meetings that you have with them. If you do not believe me, ask them. You have failed on devolution in the other direction, as I have already pointed out, because you have denuded Community Committees of funding.

As the defections rain down like confetti, you do not need to take my word for it. Councillor Janette Walker: "I have no confidence in the Leader of Leeds City Council, Judith Blake, to manage a budget of £492m in the best interests of Leeds citizens." Not me, not a Conservative, not a Liberal Democrat, not a Morley Borough Independent – one of your own Members up to two days ago. She goes on – and this is the worst bit: "There is a toxic atmosphere of mistrust, bullying, cronyism, whispers and unfairness endemic within the controlling elite of Leeds Labour Group." What a way to run a Council.

The people of Leeds deserve better. I move the amendments. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor John Procter to second.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: I second, Lord Mayor, and reserve the right to speak.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Stewart Golton.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. You will be glad to know I am a great believer in less is more (*laughter*) so there will be no preamble...

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: We did notice.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: ... there will be no goading, I will just go straight into the amendment speech, thank you.

Lord Mayor, a lot has happened, particularly over the last six months, since our last budget debate. All the debates have been dominated about who deserves our taxpayers' money, where it is spent and whether it is shared fairly. The referendum was dominated by whether the benefits of the EU membership fee were felt by everybody, and would we get £350m more a week for the NHS if we left.

COUNCILLOR SOBEL: That's our line.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: The Council's great transport conversation turned into a row about what the scheme was most likely to benefit most people in the city with the £173m that the Government had allowed us to play with. More lately, the delay in devolution deals in Yorkshire highlighted how all the money that is not being spent in London was being funnelled west of the Pennines to the point where they were getting five times what we are getting in Yorkshire.

However those debates turn out in the future, we know that today's will be just as significant and, moreover, more immediate to the people that we represent.

The financial environment for us as Councillors is critical. The demands on Children's Services and Adult Social Care continue to increase at the same time that Government remains deaf to the pleas of the Local Government Association to cut a better deal for Councils. The offer of a Social Care Precept is actually a surcharge that does little other than cover the costs of the Living Wage pressures.

The fact that there is no challenge to the Council Tax increase is evidence of the universal local political recognition of this. There is an inevitability that today's debate must address which services and, indeed, jobs we have to consider doing without in future.

As we look to our own position we must bear in mind how our decisions affect our citizens' confidence in our ability to make decisions on their behalf. We are expecting them to pay more into a system that increasingly delivers less, with community facilities closed or downgraded and their general environment deteriorating. We must be able to offer some hope that we are not bystanders observing a spiral of decline, but leaders who are shaping a sustainable future out of the diminishing resources directly at our disposal.

The inevitability of the need to change how Councils work for our people was recognised and indeed led by this city in 2012 when Councillor Wakefield led work on the Commission on the Future of Local Government. It produced a very self-aware document that recognised the reality that the traditional funding of local services was not going to improve and that in that environment there was a need for leadership to change the manner in which our services are delivered within communities. It challenged Councils to evolve into enabling and collaborative placemakers.

Lord Mayor, the Liberal Democrat Group have been consistent cheerleaders for this document, more consistently, arguably, than the Labour Group itself, and we refer to it and adhere to its principles each year at the debate over the budget. We do so in a spirit of enablement and collaboration. We recognise that we are not the ruling

group and that that group has the unenviable responsibility on its shoulders in fulfilling the needs and aspirations of the citizens of Leeds, and if we want to take over that responsibility, then we need to get a few more of us elected.

In the meantime, Lord Mayor, we must fulfil our role in Opposition and that must be met responsibly and realistically. We support as fellow citizens the actions that we can agree on which take our city forward. The Tour de France Grand Départ, the Olympic homecoming parade and the Capital of Culture bid all involve public money and could be controversial, but we support the administration in pursuing these collaborative agendas that show ambition for the city, have economic benefits and build civic pride because it is the right thing to do.

However, we disagree fundamentally with the ruling group on three significant areas. We have consistently warned that decisions in these areas are going in the wrong direction and run contrary to the principles of leading enablement and collaboration and we return to those themes today.

Let me begin with housing. The Council's Housing Growth Strategy is based on an ambition to deliver the biggest house building target in the country, the motive for which one can only conclude is to reap the resulting Council Tax and New Homes Bonus Revenue to try and replenish the Council's coffers. It is a counter-productive narrative as its ultimate outcome will be to undermine current, stable, sustainable communities and we will seek to address that this afternoon outside of the Budget debate and through our Reference Back.

The second area of disagreement is how this administration has responded to perhaps the greatest crisis facing it and that is how we care for our relatives and neighbours as we grow older in this city. The Council's muddled response lacks focus, is contradictory and ignores the potential of communities to shape the delivery of care for their area and has prompted one of our amendments which will seek to put the Council back in the right direction.

However, let me concentrate for now on recycling. Three years ago the Council ploughed on with a plan to switch off street lights on residential streets rather than invest a £6m windfall from the PFI contractor which could have paid for installing LED bulbs which would have saved the same money but kept the street lights on. Just six years ago the Labour Group were campaigning to stop the incinerator, saying we should be investing more in recycling rather than burning our waste. Six years later this Labour administration has actually overseen the first reduction in recycling rates for a generation. They have delivered precisely what they were warning against. Where has the ambition gone?

Of course, they will say it is hard times, there is less money to invest and actually we are one of the best performing Core Cities, but the other Core Cities have not benefited from a new state of the art incinerator that, as was mentioned by Councillor Blake earlier, saves this city £7m a year in landfill tax. That £7m saving is undoubtedly very welcome, given the context of tight budgets, but the refusal to invest any of this waste dividend back into improving our waste services is appalling.

We deliver services on behalf of our citizens and our citizens are ambitious for our city's environment and investing in recycling is key to us enabling the people that we represent to have real environmental impact.

Our amendment will ensure that the brown bins collection is expanded, particularly to new home owners who are currently excluded from a service their neighbours enjoy. We will also introduce glass collections, covering a third of households, in so doing targeting areas with low car ownership, recognising that the current bottle bank system discriminates against people without access to a car.

Food waste collection is the service that has the greatest impact for householders and the Council alike. Thanks to the scheme, householders in Rothwell recycle over 55% of their waste, compared with a city average little above 40%. Their waste food is turned into compost. Our amendment would enable the food waste collection service to expand from the seven year old pilot Rothwell area and finally roll out city wide. Now the rest of the city can achieve the same ambition and because city-wide collection creates critical mass, we are proposing that the city invest in an anaerobic digester to process that food waste. We believe this scheme to be the epitome of civic enterprise, encouraged by the Commission for the Future of Local Government. By expanding waste collection we are enabling our citizens to do more; moreover, the investment made by the Council is more than matched by the collaborative effort of hundreds of thousands of household partners. The more waste we collect the less that litters our streets and the more that we process through our anaerobic digester, the more income we generate as a city through the sale of methane gas that then can be invested once more in our public services.

It is worth noting at this point – and we think about opportunities lost – let us think of this year's big transport announcement, celebrating that the £173m had been turned into a £270m scheme for the future of our transport in the city, and that was thanks to a partnership with First Bus. First Bus promised a whole new fleet of cleaner methane powered vehicles. Would it not have been an even sweeter deal if we already had the anaerobic digester which we suggested in previous amendments and then we could have sold our gas to them and had Leeds gas running Leeds buses.

It is all on that theme of generating local enterprise and the Council's role in enabling it to happen that I explain the second half of the Liberal Democrat Group's amendment proposals.

There are pressures on the health and care system nationwide. We all know the tensions where Council funded care and NHS services do not complement each other, both suffering from rising demand and reduced funding in real terms. The overall funding debate takes place on a national level and it is good to see that Lib Dem Norman Lamb is working alongside Labour's Liz Kendall and the Conservative Dr Sarah Wollaston, all striving to get a cross-party consensus we can build upon. We should also congratulate the consistent cross-party lobbying on core funding by the LGA.

However when it comes to the health and care economy in Leeds, the buck stops here. We all need to be protagonists for shaping the care landscape we want to see in this city and Leeds Liberal Democrats want empowered communities in control

of the care delivered in their area. There is no doubt that historically Council delivered care was too centralised and inefficient. The purchasing for our care homes is managed through a central buyer and even the heat levels were controlled from Merrion House. The level of control was frustrating to local care home staff and who could see the waste, but they had their hands tied as far as change was concerned.

No-one weeps for those days; change was inevitable. However, the manner of the change since has left us in a position of risk that was unnecessary and needs rectifying. This Labour Council has effectively privatised provision of care settings by their hasty withdrawal from the market and their reliance on private providers to fill the gap. That private market is now itself under pressure and closing homes, trying to pay out the living wage to staff, absorbing reduced Council fees and delivering a dividend on top to their shareholders. Too often, like the big house builders, national care home operators increasingly concentrate on the luxury market, leaving our poorer elderly with no option when their home care package becomes unsustainable and unsafe for them.

What is so bewildering about the Council's abandonment to the market of our elderly care delivery is that it has delivered so much in community-based support through the development of Neighbourhood Networks and the promotion of asset-based community development.

The Liberal Democrat Group wants to build on that record of community enablement from one side of Adult Social Care and try and repair the damage inflicted by those who have pursued a balance sheet-based sell-off of our care settings.

We are used to the idea of concerned public spirited people forming governing bodies to oversee the delivery of education for the young people in a community, Ofsted checking every now and again, but the Council has a Governor Support Unit to offer advice and encourage self-evaluation. The Liberal Democrat Group believes there is a role for just such voluntary bodies to oversee the quality of care delivered in our communities, to set the standards for their area, to identify the gaps that are not provided and perhaps to develop business cases to deliver what is lacking. Surely, if community oversight is essential when you are young and vulnerable, why is it not equally so when we are old and vulnerable? (*hear, hear*)

In the same spirit as the Governor Support Unit operates, we are proposing a Community Care Support Unit be established to incubate, enable and encourage greater community involvement in caring within our neighbourhoods and to develop enterprise, private or voluntary, to meet local need or demand. This is intentionally paid for through a modest sum as its success depends much more on the Adult Care department refocusing much more on delivery within communities rather than seeking city-wide solutions. That will depend on leadership and you cannot factor for that in a Budget amendment. I would suggest that it will not improve if the portfolio holder changes annually, as has been the case of late.

Much can be achieved without moving money around from one budget line to another and there is much my group would change within several departments that cannot be mentioned in the debate without an explicit change in the budget lines – for example, Area Management and Community Hubs. However, if you want to create

something new you have to make room somewhere else in the budget and, in the spirit of a recycled amendment, we are consistent in our identified savings. The union subsidy paid by Leeds taxpayers on top of union member subs is indefensible and we would end it.

The Liberal Democrat group also believes that the payment of increments is archaic, as it rewards people for getting a year older rather than for an improvement in performance, and we would end further increments being awarded. The pay freeze for staff earning more than £30,000 a year is less straightforward than the ending of increments. However, it is proposed in the knowledge that the Director of Finance outgoing has forecast a more forgiving financial environment for the Council in future years at the same point that the effects of our amendments bear financial fruit and the commensurate wage rise becomes more affordable.

As for the £230,000 Recycling Communications Budget, it was justified last year as it was hoped to increase recycling by 2% and therefore pay for itself. Recycling actually went backwards. Rather than pay that same money down the drain again this year we thought it would be a better idea to actually spend it on extra recycling collections that might achieve more recycling, rather than spending it on lecturing to people.

To conclude, Lord Mayor, our amendments are modest financially in the overall scheme of the budget. Contrary to previous years we do not seek to reverse decisions taken already by this administration precisely because the financial manoeuvrability is so limited. This is why it is so important to make the right decisions in the first place, as regret is expensive.

Our amendments look to the future and are offered in the spirit of common purpose to urge the ruling group to take a path that is more collaborative, progressive and ultimately more productive than that which is currently proposed because it aims to enable our citizens and communities to be more in control of the services that mean most to them. I move, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Jonathan Bentley.

COUNCILLOR J BENTLEY: I second, Lord Mayor, and reserve the right to speak.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Robert Finnigan.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. In formally moving the Morley Borough Independents' Budget amendment can I pass on, as is traditional, my thanks for the work of the Finance Department especially Neil Warren and Doug Meeson. Their work, patience and good humour is greatly appreciated by the MBI group.

It is rare that the MBIs put up a Budget amendment but these are challenging times and the amendments we are putting, though modest on the impact of the overall budget, are realistic, achievable and positively enhance the lives of residents across the city, while giving a lifeline to some of the most vulnerable people across Leeds.

We are in uncharted waters with the significant funding reductions we continue to face. The budget in front of us is a reasonable attempt at using the available resource. Indeed, all the amendments from the different parties deal with a small percentage of change.

We are at an ideological crossroads with Local Government. It is clear that all Governments of whatever political persuasion have little respect for Local Government and see it as a brake on or an inconvenience to Westminster. They have placed little value on the work we do and attempted to remove the political mandate we have by imposing more conditions and direction on how Local Government should work, often removing the local electorate and what they vote for from that equation.

Such reduced settlements means we are restricted almost to only providing those activities that we are legally obliged to provide – education, child protection, adult social care, highways repairs, planning control and waste removal. It reduces our capacity to provide the quality of life issues people value – libraries, parks, sports centres, youth services, community support and community safety. We are withdrawing to an almost similar position to Councils a hundred years ago which sends us, in our view, backwards and not forwards. When you consider that surveys show Local Government is more trusted than National Government, then this is clearly a retrograde step.

The financial contribution from Central Government is again disappointing and this comes to a further point that is obvious to any observer of this annual process. This is the incessant gerrymandering of Central Government finance to Councils by whatever national Government is elected. We have been sitting here long enough to see a Labour Government financially stuff Tory shires as they bung cash to their mates in Local Government, as they did in the early 2000s to their friends in Manchester, Nottingham and Bristol.

Under the Coalition we saw Central Government cash pass away from Metropolitan Councils towards more rural areas as the North saw reductions other regions did not see, and Labour areas were given a similar reduction. Now in 2017 we see further reductions across Local Government but with some Tory shires again doing better than those large urban areas that surely need more of the cash. This is a recurrent theme throughout the last 20 years where Central Government fiddles the rules to stuff cash into the pockets of their party political friends. This has to change.

We are told that by 2020 we will retain all income raised via Council Tax and Business Rates and that should prevent the possibility of Central Government interfering with Councils and passing on reductions year on year. I hope this will be a genuine new dawn for Local Government and now a false hope as Central Government passes on more responsibility to local Councils without providing the mechanism to cover the costs of these new burdens. It can only be good if we become more independent of Central Government and in charge of our own destiny. It remains to be seen if the rhetoric amounts to that capacity to generally run our own affairs without Central Government interference.

A lack of faith all Central Governments have in us and the almost pathological dislike they have for Councils can be seen in the decisions to ringfence some budget nationally while letting others, especially Local Government, take the brunt of the austerity programme we are going through. Let us hope that this is the end of such an era. It cannot be fair or reasonable to ringfence foreign aid, education, the NHS, Defence and police budgets and let Local Government take an ever-increasing burden of the cuts that are being made.

Local Government has become leaner and more efficient over the last seven years. It has had to become so and that is a good thing, but there is no more fat to cut without damaging what happens at a local level to our residents' lives. The inevitable outcome, if we continue down this road, is that more libraries shut, sports centres become tattier or close, parks become unkempt and deteriorate, playgrounds become old and rusty, youth work becomes a rare occurrence with an already stretched voluntary sector trying to fill gaping holes in provision. It is a retrograde step.

Can we find a better way of using national resources to support Local Government? I think we can. We could scrap HS2 and spend the money more wisely. We could subject the Foreign Aid Budget to the same scrutiny and value for money assessment that we subject Local Government to. We could recycle some of the savings from leaving the European Union - an unelected and unaccountable organisation that has not had its accounts signed off for years - and use the savings to support Local Government. There are genuinely alternative choices that we can make when it comes to funding Local Councils.

Turning specifically to our Budget amendment, we propose reversing the cuts to Community Committees and to reverse the reduction in the Advice Service budget. Community Committees make a tangible difference to the communities they serve. Reversing these cuts by supporting our amendment generates an additional £190,000-worth of spending to be used to improve the quality of life issues impacting on the communities we represent.

The amendment also replaces the £50,000 cut to the Advice Service budget, a budget where every penny is needed to support our citizens to make their way through the complex benefits system and to provide the legal support they need when it comes to debt, divorce, bereavement and many of the other challenges that face our communities. For a modest investment we improve significantly the capacity we give to empower our citizens against bureaucracies and processes that are often remote and unsympathetic.

The reimbursing of these cuts is financed by a reduction in Special Responsibilities Allowances for Councillors, not a reduction in the basic allowance. Many of us see this as a payroll vote, allowances to keep the factions within a ruling administration loyal, and if this is the case it does not seem to have had much success in keeping the Labour administration together and immune from defections.

These reductions will show Councillors' commitment to doing what is in the best interests of their community, not what is in their own personal financial interests, and show solidarity with our communities who are often facing similar reductions in their income in these difficult times. The fact that this modest reduction in Special

Responsibilities Allowance of 30% generates savings of £240,000 shows how Councillors' allowances play a significant part within the budget.

We commend that the administration's defence of Adult Social Care and Children's Services budgets but we urge them to go further and adopt the amendment we are proposing today. I formally move my amendment and trust colleagues will support what is a modest and realistic approach that improves the quality of life for our communities. I formally move, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Tom Leadley.

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: Can I second Councillor Finnigan's amendment and make a few comments in support.

I think that increasing or rather maintaining the Wellbeing Grants budget is needed to keep a sense of purpose for the Community Committees, whose truly discretionary spending per head of population is already no more than that of a moderately active Parish Council. Anything less would be as well administered directly by ward Councillors as revenue or capital community grants of the MICE and Ward Based Initiative kinds.

Members of the public show little interest in some of the Community Committees and Councillors find it quicker or more convenient to deal directly with service managers rather than second hand through area management. Community Committees are in danger of becoming merely an unproductive layer of bureaucracy, so we do need to give them more of a sense of purpose.

Avoiding a reduction of the Advice Consortium funding by restoring £50,000 to that budget heading would be a modest amount of money well spent. There are many who need quick, unbiased, free advice on how to nip everyday difficulties in the bud before they snowball out of control, as well as solving more deeply ingrained problems.

Finally, in the principle of turkeys not voting for Christmas, no doubt there will be limited support for an across the board 30% reduction in Responsibility Allowances. Actually in my view such a cut might be too simplistic but the proposal should give food for thought; it might come back in a different form next year to achieve a 30% net reduction of the sum total of those allowances. Any effective Executive Board Member or Scrutiny Board chairman should be worth the salt now offered. It is a long tale of bag carriers, door openers and bottle washers which is the problem. *(laughter)*

A Leeds University politics graduate who could answer the question "What are the duties and corporate value of Leeds City Council's Assistant Board Executive Members?" would be worth a distinction. *(laughter)*

Earlier generations would have said they toil not neither do they spin, though nowadays you would have to take out the bit about not spinning. *(laughter)* There was an episode of Absolutely Fabulous in which Bubble (that is Jane Horrocks' character) was ordered, "Remind me of your job description" to which she answered,

after a brief pause for thought, “I get paid” which just about sums up our problem. Thank you, Lord Mayor, I second the amendment. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor David Blackburn.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Firstly, just in answer to Tom, turkeys might not vote for Christmas but if you move it enough times they will get that fed up they might do!

I have got to say, first of all can I thank Neil Warren and Doug Meeson for all the work they have done in helping with our budget amendment. Our budget amendment was going to be substantially longer than this but as one went through the budget we found out what difficulty the administration has got because there is not a lot there you can do anything with, so we came down to what it is there.

I have got to say, listening to Judith when she was moving the Budget, at times I have sympathy and then it came to, “Oh everything is awful, it’s them nasty Tories and then wonderful Labour is going to do this.” Come on, the fact is whoever was sat over there in control of this Council we are in trouble and would have a real bother to put a decent budget together.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Quite right.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: We are not funded properly, we have not been funded properly for years and the cuts have just made it worse. (*hear, hear*) I think we have got to be truthful about that. It is not so wonderful and you are not doing yourself any good by saying it is wonderful when you do not deliver.

I have got to say, when we are talking about social care and the cuts in social care and Judith during the speech mentioned the thing of extra care again, it brought to mind the two sites in my ward designated as sites for building extra care homes on. We sold them and what we have sold them for? Ordinary housing. If we are selling the land off we are not going to get that extra care so we have got to do something. If the private sector will not do it we have got to do it ourselves. That stands for itself.

Our amendment quite simply is at my normal thing of getting Members’ allowances down to the level that we believe they should be and my group actually have done over the years. That is what we claim. That is the maximum a Green Councillor can claim, what we have in our amendment here. I have put this every year and all right, Members do not support it and I have told you I will put this while ever I am here, this will be here every year until you do accept it.

We are in a time now where things are pretty bad and I think we have got to make some sacrifices as Councillors, so I am asking Councillors and very high paid members of staff to have a cut in their incomes as well to give us the resources to do what I am proposing in my budget amendment, which I will relay to you, which is to increase Wellbeing by the £180k is being cut in the budget, which a number of parties are also advocating; a £350k for Children’s and Families to put an extra year on the Head Start Project; an increase of £250k to Community Environment for Neighbourhood Improvement work.

I will just mention Neighbourhood Improvement work. We have a Neighbourhood Improvement area in my ward and I have got to say I thank the administration for the opportunity of what we are doing there but we have got to fund them correctly. The funding for that comes down to Community Committees. Our Community Committee has been cut, our Wellbeing has been cut. The Wellbeing is not large enough for us to actually do something about that so what are we going to do? Are we going to promote it? Am I going to ask Pudsey Councillors and Calverley and Farsley Councillors to give up all their Wellbeing so a small part of my ward gets the benefit? No, we should be funding something centrally and that is what this money is for.

Moving on, I am moving £100,000 on to local parks and cemeteries for increased spending there and £100,000 to StreetScene.

In the second amendment, which I think is a fairly simple one and it comes from my own experience as a ward Councillor, I am having to deal particularly in one areas on the ring road that floods, that we have lots and lots of gulleys that are blocked. They are not blocked because of rubbish that has got in them, it is because the actual gulleys themselves are collapsing. What happens is – Mark may know about this from his days as Exec Member – the fact is we cleaned them and immediately they get blocked up and they all tend to be in areas that are prone to flooding.

We have not got the funds to repair those and I am suggesting we put £1m into the capital programme for the purpose of doing some work to try and stop this problem. I think we all have trouble with this and we do not seem able to do anything, and that is what we propose there.

On the other amendments from the other parties, we will be supporting one or two of them but certainly what we will not do is we will not support anything that attacks the rights of our staff to proper trade union representation. We think that is wrong and not correct.

We also will not support anything that cuts the wages or cuts the premium times of staff at lower levels in this organisation. All right, the fat cats at the top we can cut but the ones at the bottom we have got to look after. I move my amendment, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Ann Blackburn.

COUNCILLOR A BLACKBURN: I wish to second and reserve the right to speak, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Mark Dobson.

COUNCILLOR M DOBSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor, in giving me the chance to move the Garforth and Swillington Independents' amendment, and let us just hope with my well highlighted issues I am able to cope and get through the whole

speech. (*laughter*) Let's just hope I can hang in there to the very end, that would be good, wouldn't it!

I think before I want to move the amendment, what I would like to talk about is to highlight some of the actually tremendous issues of the administration. I think it is wrong to come into a Budget meeting with an amendment and with criticism without actually pointing out what has gone well, of which there is much.

With somebody who has a passion for energy and how energy is delivered and affordable energy, I think the work around the White Rose Energy Initiative is one to be highly commended, as is the work on domestic violence. The joined-up approach to domestic violence that is now being undertaken is a credit to this city and one that I am very happy to congratulate the administration upon, as is the blight of having people in bed and breakfasts. The fact that this city can say there is nobody in bed and breakfast accommodation is a credit to them, it is a credit to all of us and today is not the day when we should rule a line under and forget people's achievements in administration, because I have been there and it ain't easy.

In terms of Park and Ride I think the initiatives around working on our city and getting it cleaner and getting our highways cleaned up is a very, very worthwhile and a good initiative.

It is on the environment we are focusing a little bit with our amendment, of course, because for many years – and somebody else I am going to pay tribute to, I had five years working with Neil Evans who brought around I think all of the projects as Director that I have just focused upon. Every year we had a ritual and it kind of went like this. He would come into my office and we would have a series of green, amber and red budget proposals to put forward from the Department and the first words we used to discuss every year, it was quite funny towards the end, was “Bulky waste, yes or no” – “No”, and we moved on. That was the end of it because bulky waste is an important factor in our strategy around keeping our cities clean and green and the Garforth and Swillington Independents, and Councillor Field will elaborate on this, will explain that we do not think there has been enough qualified and quantified evidence yet as to the effect, if that is removed, on fly tipping and we do not want the city to go backwards. We think Environmental Services is at a bit of a crossroads. Yes, it is because of the financial situation but what we cannot afford to do is go backwards, so that is the reason for our amendment.

What we will also continue to do is highlight what we think is the unfair treatment of Councils in the North. Andrew, I accept your point around moneys per head of population between, say, us and Surrey but what I cannot accept is a deal being effectively done over a text message, albeit having gone to the wrong person. I do not think anybody can say that back of a fag packet approach to Council finance and how the Revenue Support Grant is worked out can be done on that basis, so we will continue, as the smallest but perfectly formed group in the Council, to continue to bang on that particular drum around fair and equal funding for the North.

We also support heavily the principle of local decision making and therefore will be supporting amendments that have come forward from the Conservative Group and the Morley Boroughs this afternoon about ringfencing the Wellbeing funding.

We think it is important that Councillors of any persuasion and all persuasions have a say in how Council services are delivered and effectively that is all our collective voice.

Actually, it is the real interface with the Community Committees that the public has that leads me to believe if it is going to be something more than a talking shop and a pat on the head and isn't life terrible, then the funding has to remain in place, so we will be supporting those amendments.

We also believe in the devolution of local responsibility and as such we will be supporting the amendment around lettings of community assets and placing them in the community arena, because it gives us two things. It gives us better local accountability, better local decision making and a role for all Council Members which we feel is important because whatever group anybody represents, the Garforth and Swillington Independents believe that invariably Members know best in terms of what goes on in their communities.

In terms of the amendment around devolving a ringfenced budget under the stewardship of Community Committees to replace the HAPs, after a lot of thought on this between myself and Councillor Field, we are of the opinion that some HAPs may work well if there is a collegiate approach between Members and the members of the public who sit upon them, but my experience of the HAP in my area has been less than satisfactory. I will not give you the numbers today except to say Garforth and Swillington managed to bag the princely sum of £1,200 from HAP budgets.

We propose that to support that amendment it does sit with Community Committees but with one caveat - that members of the public from the Housing Panels are somehow incorporated into that part of the decision making process, because what would be a retrograde step would be to take away the rights of tenants to have their own say on their own communities. With that caveat we would support that particular amendment.

Again, it is early days for us but I think one thing we do want to draw on is around capital investment being for people and not for business people, and I will put it no stronger than that because I think my views on this subject are extremely well known. We do think it has to be a priority that we support our creaking infrastructure and we would therefore support the amendment to put £5m injection from the capital programme into our highways for very pragmatic reasons, actually, and more financial but actually non-political reasons.

We are judged on these bread and butter issues, we are judged on potholes, we are judged on people like the chap in my ward the other day who came off his motor cycle, we are judged on the fact that we put money into town centre regeneration (and the highway in Garforth Main Street looks like it is about to collapse) and these are the bread and butter issues which all of us are judged upon, so we will be supporting that particular amendment.

The housing amendment to create a £5m fund, if you like, to support small and medium builders also finds favour with the Garforth and Swillington Independents. Actually, that is through sheer pragmatism. We have to hit numbers that are frankly

unachievable without bringing in pieces of property – I am thinking of neighbouring Parlington – which will be destroying ancient woodland. We have kind of put ourselves in this fix but actually the Government has put it in as well, let us be absolutely frank about it, but we need a strategy to get those brown field sites developed and to support regeneration where regeneration is actually needed – not where developers want to build but where communities need to see houses, infrastructure and homes.

The reality about Leeds is, we are not Manchester, we are Leeds, and we are very specific in our geography and what makes us important. We have a town centre and we have satellite towns and villages. It will be to all our detriments if, when we shuffle off this mortal coil in 30 years' time or so, we have urban sprawl. I want Garforth to remain Garforth, Swillington Swillington, Kippax Kippax, Methley Methley, Aberford Aberford. It has got to be incremental growth but none of it can be done until the builders either pick up the gauntlet and build on the brown field or we go on the front foot and assist them in that aspiration. That will be finding favour with the Garforth and Swillington Independents.

What we will not be supporting under any circumstances going forward will be any amendments to the Council budgets that erodes on the rights of trade union representation. We believe wholeheartedly that our workers are the jewel in this Council's crown and it is our opinion that they deserve the full rights to not only trade union representation but the time that the convenors put in on often very difficult cases. I will say this, when I was in Parks and Countryside I was on the wrong side of this on more than one occasion, but it is still the right thing for this Council to do so we will not be supporting any amendments that include the erosion of workers' rights to trade union representation.

Garforth and Swillington floods and it floods for a variety of reasons – complex reasons – but one of the reasons we do flood are the gulleys. We clean gulleys, we put a lot of money into gulley cleaning and it does nothing. Often though, David, what I would say is this, when it does go into the infrastructure it ceases to be the Council's issue and becomes the issue of Yorkshire Water. What the Garforth and Swillington Independents would say is that yes, we would support an injection of capital of £1m into the service and maintenance of the gulleys; however, this cannot be meaning that Yorkshire Water can effectively walk away. They have got to play their part. We come and clean the gulley and it is flooded in two minutes' flat because the drains underneath have collapsed. If we are going to put our money where our mouth is, so must they.

We are disappointed that the £7m generated from Energy from Waste has not gone into the kind of areas that I would have personally supported around environmental improvements and building up our clear evidence as a Core City that we are one of the best Core Cities in terms of recycling and other aspirations, but I think it would be kind of disingenuous not to say that that money has to go into the base. We have no option. There is no spare capacity in a lot of this budget to do anything aspirational. Yes, we have aspirations but not at the expense of front line services, so whilst I see the merit in what Stewart had to say, we will not be supporting that particular amendment today.

The biggest bugbear for us, of course, is around Adult Social Care provision. We believe that there should be a mixed economy around Adult Social Care provision, a mixture of good private and good public. Here is the fly in the ointment. I have sat on Scrutiny Board now for a year where there is scant evidence that the private sector can adequately fill that gap between people who need care homes and dementia care home provision. There is not enough with good CQC ratings.

There is not enough evidence for us in Garforth and Swillington to say with a degree of confidence yes, we can decant your loved one from, say, The Green to another facility without there being any ill effects. We do not see the evidence for that.

The Better Lives Strategy is great as far as it goes but it is fundamentally flawed because here is what will happen. Councillor Dawson said earlier he has been to see community facilities where people are living well in a variety of situations, which is admirable, but one day this happens – your loved one can no longer cope in a supported living house, your loved one can no longer cope at home, your loved one can no longer go on with just simply going to a Day Centre no matter how good it is. You have to make the difficult decision – I am looking at my sister – where you have to put your loved one into a home - in my mother's case, dementia.

I will say this, if I could have put my mother into a home like The Green, Council run with a good CQC rating, I would have been doing cartwheels down South Parkway because all families want when the inevitable happens and you are up against those decisions – and you do go to pieces, you stop being a thinking person, you become the rabbit in the headlights and you want the best for your loved one. I am not convinced that the Better Lives Strategy delivers that. Therefore, it is with regret that it is difficult to support the administration budget.

Do we want money to go into Adult Social Care? Yes, it is motherhood and apple pie, of course, we do. What we have to make sure of, every single one of us, is that that money is spent for the betterment of the individual and that means to the end of life, and that means quality care homes in the public sector run by public sector workers. We talk about capital. One argument around The Green is it does not have modern facilities. Use capital to invest in those facilities.

A week ago we were not a party, we have not even had the opportunity yet to put down any significant amendments other than the one that Councillor Field will be speaking to, but the reality is this is a passion of Garforth and Swillington Independents and it is not an issue on which we are going to go away.

With that, and I am sorry to finish on a rather flat note, I would just like to say one final word of thanks, actually, to my ward colleague, Sarah Field. It is not easy when you have been on a group since May and leave that group and it was not done lightly, I assure you. Sarah is a highly articulate, intelligent woman, a former speech writer and policy maker in the Scottish Parliament. She would have flown on the Labour Group given time under the right tutelage. She would have flown but instead she took a stance to join me – been there, done it all, got the tee-shirt and then off to the Back Benches – to make a stand on issues that we think are important to this Council.

My final note today will be a sincere word of thanks that one has become two, it has given a voice to the people of Garforth and Swillington, I hope it has given us the opportunity to make some sensible amendments and support some sensible amendments but, moreover, to get behind the issues that are important of us and those issues are elderly and vulnerable people. I will tell you what, we are all going to get there so I am hoping that we can perhaps think on that as we go forward.

With that, Lord Mayor, I move our amendment. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Sarah Field to second and it will be Sarah's maiden speech.

COUNCILLOR FIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. In moving the Budget amendment in the name of the Garforth and Swillington Independents we think it is important to acknowledge how far the service has come in ensuring our communities are cleaner. This is reflected in our recycling targets which, since 2010, have shown a remarkable turnaround in our ambitions to make Leeds the cleanest, greenest city in the UK. However, the Garforth and Swillington Independents are not satisfied that there is any empirical evidence in place to suggest that the Waste Communications Budget is adding to our push to become the greenest city in terms of our recycling aspirations.

A 2.5% increase on green bin collections and an overall improvement on recycling of 4% between July and September last year, whilst admirable, cannot be entirely around the issue of Waste Communications. We believe that while Waste Communications Education and Waste Advisers were an essential part of the fortnightly collection roll out, we can no longer see a completion of that work in terms of added value to the tune of £350,000.

Officers often say that Leeds is the only city that offers free bulky waste removal, but surely Leeds should not be judged on what other cities may or may not prioritise. We should be proud that this essential service remains free for all. We are very concerned that charging will disenfranchise poorer people in poorer communities who will simply not be able to afford the service and we do not want to see these people left behind.

The jury is out on the impact that charging will have on fly tipping and the associated costs of this blight on our communities, and until we have more comprehensive evidence, does this Council want to risk the fine balance we have achieved in addressing the environmental issues facing our city? I second the amendment. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lucinda Yeadon.

COUNCILLOR YEADON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am speaking in support of Councillor Blake's budget. Let me start by thanking our staff in Environment and Parks Services for their hard work and commitment this year. Their energy, enthusiasm and enterprising approach has delivered significant achievements in very difficult circumstances. These services are some of the most visible for our

residents. They are central to communities and for many people they can be the main interaction that they have with the Council, whether that is having their bin collected or taking a walk in their local park, which is why we want to maintain these services but have to do so with less funding.

This means looking hard at everything we do. Our parks are not just green spaces, they are key to community cohesion and fundamental to people's health and wellbeing, so Leeds is choosing to do things differently. We are finding innovative ways to deliver a more sustainable future for our parks and the best possible outcomes for the people living here.

Since the Government is persisting with crippling austerity, it is crucial now more than ever that we get the most out of our assets. Councillor Blake has already outlined our planned investment in Tropical World at Temple Newsam and, of course, the hotly anticipated penguins at Lotherton Hall. We are also creating the Leeds Parks Fund, providing an opportunity to generate more investment for our parks.

This Government is putting our parks and green spaces at risk. Just last week the CLG reported that parks are at tipping point and facing a period of decline. Because of Government cuts, 92% of Local Authorities have seen their Parks budget slashed. In Leeds the department has had to be reduced by 40%.

Whilst the Government continues this destructive agenda we will remain enterprising, balancing the needs of local residents with raising the profile of Leeds, promoting our parks as major visitor attractions and using this income to sustain our green spaces in the most sensible way possible.

Moving on to the amendments, we already have an ambitious target to deliver £1.6m of efficiency savings in waste alone in this budget. Taking that further at this time, as suggested by the Conservative amendment, will undermine our approach and put public services at risk.

The Lib Dems in their amendment have said that they would increase the budget to fund kerbside glass collection, but, Stewart, I do not know how you figured out your numbers but this will actually only pay for one route, which I think is about 24,000 properties. I am sure we all look forward to the Focus leaflets telling us where that one route will be.

We do share the ambition to introduce both glass and food waste collections as well as expanding our brown bin service but we cannot implement an unsustainable service. It will cost £5m to roll out both glass and food waste city-wide. In an ideal world, a world without Tory cuts, this might be possible but that is not our reality. What is more, the Liberal Democrats believe it is right to pay for all of this and an anaerobic digester by freezing the pay and increments of our hardworking staff – staff who have not had a real terms pay increase for years.

Lord Mayor, this administration believes that we should be working with staff and unions to deliver savings and better outcomes for this city, not against them.

As I have mentioned, we do have to make some difficult decisions and charging for bulky waste is one of these. We are not alone in doing this, as already mentioned. Several cities already charge for these collections. Birmingham charges £25; Bristol £25; Manchester £27; Sheffield £20.40. We are proposing to charge £20 per collection.

These cities have found no correlation between charging for bulky waste and fly tipping but it is not just about bringing in income. It is also about encouraging residents to reconsider how this service is used, to look at re-use instead of just throwing things away. We will use a percentage of this income generated to invest in social enterprises promoting re-use and helping reduce the amount of waste that is generated in our city.

Moving forward, one of the biggest environmental and health challenges for this city, as has already been mentioned today, is poor air quality and I can certainly say to you, to everyone across this Chamber this has not gone down in our priorities – in fact, it is going up.

It is critical, though, that the Government takes national action to address air quality. The current £3m fund for Local Authorities in England is woefully inadequate. However, we know that we cannot afford to wait for the national response. We are acting now to improve air quality for our communities. The Cutting Carbon and Improving Air Quality Breakthrough Group is a fundamental part of this and I would like to thank the cross-party co-operation on this.

I have not quite managed to fit this all in but we have numerous challenges and this administration is not shying away from tackling important issues. This is why I am proud to be part of a Labour Council genuinely striving for fairness and equality and this is why I am proud to support to support Councillor Blake's budget. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Dan Cohen.

COUNCILLOR COHEN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I notice it is Councillor Blake's budget – nobody else's, not the Labour Group, just Councillor Blake's budget.

COUNCILLOR: Give over.

COUNCILLOR COHEN: My Lord Mayor, listening to the Leader of Council today one could be forgiven for thinking in the next twelve months the residents of Leeds are going to see a wholly different level of service from this Council. The absolute truth is very different. It was spelled out by Councillor Carter on behalf of our group. This next year Leeds City Council will spend just £3.7m less than we are going to spend in this year. That is less than one per cent of our total budget. The residents of Leeds really care about what we spend, not how we get there.

I realise that that does not suit Councillor Blake's preferred headline of doom and gloom, that it is an uncomfortable inconvenient truth, but the truth is precisely that.

I would like to now focus on some of the amendments that Councillor Carter has put forward today on behalf of our group. The truth is, our city's roads are simply not good enough and, if we are honest, many of us time and again get into our inboxes from really concerned residents complaints about the standard of our roads and our highways.

While it is welcome that in recent years the Government has assisted with special funds to tackle potholes, it is absolutely right that we as a Council step up to the plate and make a serious, meaningful £5m investment as our group has proposed to invest in our roads. Bluntly, the residents of Leeds deserve nothing better.

Turning to Community Committees, I am afraid the Labour Group cannot have it both ways. You cannot allocate time in Council meeting after Council meeting to laud the tremendous work of Community Committees and then, when it comes to the budget, hack away at their funding. It simply makes no sense. This year's proposed cut of £180,000 is a whopping 13% axe being taken to Community Committee funding. It is outrageous.

Reversing this cut, freeing up the Youth Activity Fund, moving the funds managed by the Housing Advisory Panels over to the Community Committees where the decisions are taken by locally elected Members accountable directly to their communities, has to be the right approach.

In recent months we have seen a very strange situation where this Council has taken the decision to move fully away from providing elderly residential care. Our view is that this really is a step too far and we really must, as a city, revisit the Better Lives Strategy.

We do not feel it should be beyond the wit of man or woman to find a creative way to partner up with private providers and ensure that the Council still maintains a role in this vital provision. Our view is that this is the only way we as a Council can absolutely assure ourselves that we are properly providing our vulnerable elderly residents with proper care and surely to goodness we owe them that much.

We also have some real concerns about a number of areas within this budget, not least within the portfolio that I take Shadow responsibility for. This year the budget has proposed an increased investment within the Children and Family portfolio and that is absolutely right and it is absolutely welcome. We are incredibly grateful as a Council, I know, to the very significant funding – the extra funding - that the Government has provided that in many ways has allowed us to do that. However, this does pre-suppose that the Local Education Authority will be able to generate a certain level of income and I am afraid we on this side of the Chamber have no faith that that is going to be deliverable.

My Lord Mayor, there is no question that this is a tight budget. As a Conservative Group though we have shown that even within the limitations we face it is quite possible to bring forward far better proposals. It is quite possible, as Conservatives have demonstrated, to make better decisions and make better outcomes for the people of Leeds: investment in elderly care; investment in our roads;

investment in our Community Committees; investment in our Neighbourhood Networks; better use of the resources we have; being honest about what we actually have to spend on local services. Lord Mayor, that is what the Conservative budget amendments do today and I support them. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Sandy Lay.

COUNCILLOR LAY: Thanks, Lord Mayor. I shall be speaking on the challenge facing our Children's Centres and, if I get some time, because we are not going to get to Exec Board papers, I shall also just say a bit on the Better Lives Programme.

I am not one to criticise this administration when it comes to Children's Centres because we all know that many such centres have been closed across the country due to the continuing Government funding settlements. This is more a plea, really, to the administration to fully think through their funding formula changes and to continue to ensure that those partner agencies helping us continue to fund the centres.

My centre in Otley are doing their bit, like all the centres and, despite losing one senior and two part-time workers, have increased their family reach. They do this with little fanfare, a fair share of dedication and understanding that they are doing important work to enhance and improve the life chances of our difficult and hard to reach under fives. Where they do have a concern, though, is where they tell us that we think they have a hidden deprivation because we only count families in social housing and we cannot be sure that we are identifying those households struggling in private rented accommodation.

I have to say I am concerned about centres like my own in Otley and others like them across the city who will see reductions to their allocation because our formula does not recognise this. Can I ask the Exec Member that they reassure Members that any new funding formula will ensure that those hidden in private rented accommodation are not under-represented? Without this recognition and additional funding I cannot help but fear further staff cuts and the eventual handing back of my Children's Centre – not mine, the community's Children's Centre – from the cluster to the city Council.

Moving on, I would just like to comment on the Better Lives programme, really. When I got elected in 2012 one of the first things I did was sit on the Better Lives working group and there were always two fundamentals really that I wanted to know, and which residents always asked; that was, how can we be sure that the independent sector will look after our residents and, will be end up eventually having no Council run provision?

I was told quite often, "Do not worry, Councillor Lay, the independent sector will look after our residents and will deliver the high quality care our residents need." The only problem is, it has not and it does not. In five years CQC reports prove it. They also said, "Do not worry, Councillor Lay, we are moving into specialist care" so they chose a variety of specialist homes, The Green being one of them, but only now

we are not, are we, because we are going to close them. This is not really on when we look at local private provision.

They are increasingly building luxury accommodation for self-funders and the self-funders market. If we close all our homes, how will Leeds fund those residents without access to their own money? I can see those private providers saying, “Of course we will take your residents but for fairness you will have to pay the same.” It would not take many Council-funded residents paying private rates before you have subsumed that £350,000. No-one in the administration seems to see this.

Fortunately the tenacious and formidable Lindsey Cannon, who we are all getting emails from, I think, along with just about everyone, including the Garforth and Swillington Independents, are imploring the Council to do the right thing. CQC ratings in Council care homes are significantly better than any others nearby. The private sector is volatile. Not only can we not seem to trust them to deliver well resources, high quality care but what would we do if we had a Southern Cross style bankruptcy? How would Leeds manage such a collapse were it to happen here?

Five years on and what have I learned? It is clear as a Council we are not doing a particularly good job with our strategy, I do not think. We have not improved the private sector like we said we would, we have not built our own provision, just one extra care facility in five years – fortunately in my ward, I have to say – and we have not listened to our communities. We seem to shut fast and open slowly.

THE LORD MAYOR: Sandy, can you wind up, please.

COUNCILLOR LAY: Yes, that is fine. That’s it, thanks. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: I have got three Members who have indicated they want to speak – Councillor James Lewis.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I thought I would check, just before I came to this meeting I thought I would check some fake news and see what is going on in the world. Sometimes stuff you read on the internet can be amazing. I read it on a site called the Daily Mash – “Woman who keeps voting Tory cannot work out why public services are...” well, I will not use the final word in the Council Chamber, Lord Mayor! When I read this this morning I thought this is a hilarious satire about somebody who cannot work out why a party that does not value public services and keeps taking away money from them gets into a position where there are no public services there, but actually as this afternoon has gone on I think this fake news, you can somehow completely separate the absolute deep cuts to public services in Leeds, the Council, the police, the NHS, welfare services and the fact that things are not happening, things are not great and things are not as we thought they would be.

David made a point, he said the Labour Group always says everything was wonderful and I listened very carefully to Councillor Blake’s speech earlier when she started talking about the absolute poverty in this city. We know there is deep set, absolute poverty in this city, we do not think things are wonderful and we will do everything we can to tackle these problems. I think anybody who walks out of the

Council Chamber and thinks we do not understand, do not recognise and do not want to deal with these problems, is distributing their own fake news.

I was also quite interested in Councillor Andrew Carter's speech earlier as he took us on a little wander around the country and I thought of course he would want to talk about anything else other than what his Government is doing to Leeds. If anybody here believes that the money we have got from the New Homes Bonus – bearing in mind the New Homes Bonus money was not new money to Local Government, it was money that was taken out from one pot and put back in the other very quickly to be removed when we have a problem, it is new money to Local Government, is deluding themselves. Again, anybody that thinks £500m on infrastructure is welcome, of course, if we had similar levels of spending to London we would be looking at £2bn or £3bn. We can all see a lot more there.

I was also interested in Andrew's comparison of the budget in 2010 to 2016 and I thought he is really losing it here because there is no way anybody who is being serious about presenting an Opposition budget rather than just doing a little bit of an entertaining knockabout speech can think that the shape of the Council in 2010, the way funding came in, the way grants came in is in any way comparable today and I think that just shows the Conservative Group and lots of others who have spoken have all talked about wanting to do different things but they have completely taken it away from the lack of resources this city has.

Had our budget continued growing at the 2010 levels we would be looking at spending not £490 today, we would be looking at a £700m or £800m budget for this Council. Just imagine what we could do with that. Just imagine what we could do with that.

The old fallacy again about why we have austerity. Apparently we have austerity because borrowing was too high. Let us not forget, the last six years a Conservative Chancellor has borrowed more money than any other Labour Government has ever borrowed. (*hear, hear*) What did Labour Governments do with it? They created the NHS, they created the Open University, they changed the fabric of society. What has this Government done? Forced austerity on large parts of the country.

We hear it every year about the reason for austerity. They have not cut borrowing, all they have done is cut spending and borrowing has gone up and up. It is the economics of the madhouse.

Just one more thing I wanted to turn to about the position of Surrey County Council. The Civic Hall Branch of the Huddersfield Town Supporters Club, who seem to have a good run of results and they soon crawl out of the woodwork, don't they, Robert? (*laughter*) I make this point, if Kirklees, which in terms of business rates is the poorest Council in West Yorkshire – there is a link here – if Kirklees had the same deal that has been done to Surrey it would not be extra money in their account, it would be a cut of between £14m and £18m if they had the same deal which Surrey had, which is Business Rate Retention. This shows that business rates is a fiddle between moving money from North to South.

Of course, where do the masters of austerity come in our own Council budget? Of course they go straight for our own staff and straight for some of our lowest paid staff. All the thought they could have put into our budget amendment, that is where they go straight to, to the trade unions, to our staff, to the people that do the work and the people that have really transformed this Council.

This Council looks nothing like it did in 2010 – far more innovative, looking at smarter and smarter working, looking at services driven a lot more by attracting people to come and look at – yes, look at the animals in Tropical World. It is a great way of bringing money into the Council and protecting services. This Council is different, the transformations come with the staff, the transformations come through and the trade unions working with us on more flexible working, on challenging spending like agencies and bringing in changes and that is, of course, straight where the Tories and Liberals want to bring austerity in here – our poorest paid staff.

This Labour administration has increased the pay of the lowest staff and is committed to doing a lot more around that. I see the red light is on so I second Councillor Blake's budget. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor John Procter.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. James Lewis describes the Leader of our group as having had a wander around the country. If Andrew Carter had a wander around the country in his budget amendment I can only describe Judith Blake's presentation of the budget as a ramble around the nation, quite frankly, Lord Mayor. There were parts of it where I was literally open mouthed. The very notion that everything that is bad in the world is the fault of the Tories and the wicked evil bankers (*interruption*) – bizarre, isn't it – and everything good in the world is the result of the Labour administration on Leeds City Council. (*interruption*)

Is it any wonder that you are treated like an absolute joke in Westminster and in Whitehall, because, frankly, that is genuinely your view, isn't it? It is your view and unfortunately the view that you have here, whilst you think it is all good knockabout and a bit of a laugh, that is the very view that you also transmit into Westminster, so is there any wonder that when the Northern Powerhouse is trying to be created the other side of the Pennines that actually folk take a look at what is going on here and think for God's sake, are we really going to entrust these people, are we really going to entrust this lot with these sums of money and the future governance of the North? I think not. I think not.

We get the Labour Leader of Council even claiming credit for the Brownlees' medals, for goodness sake, today! (*laughter*) I did not see either of them thanking her for all of her great assistance in their momentous set of victories in Olympic Games and the like.

COUNCILLOR COUPAR: You must have missed them.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: That is the very problem because historically what we have had from varying other Leaders and former Labour groups is actually a serious attempt to do what they think is right in terms of the budgetary position in this

city. Whilst I might not have agreed with many of those presentations and those budgets, at least they were putting forward what they genuinely believed in in terms of the right mechanisms that they thought were right for this city.

When we hear James Lewis come to his commentary, what do we get there? Labour have created the NHS and the Open University. Again, where is the serious rationale in that? It is yet another example of this Labour administration's random selection out of the box of tricks to try and throw something in the air to divert everybody from the real issues that he has got in his own administration itself. The Labour Group in this city is divided from top to bottom and we all know it.

COUNCILLOR COUPAR: Not, it is not. No, it is not.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: The great thing about being a Chief Whip or a former Chief Whip in fact is that people cannot stop beating a path to your door to impart information that they think you should have and it has been enlightening over the last two weeks the number of people who have been beating a path to my door and ringing me up and telling me all kinds of things – all kinds of things about what has been going on in the Labour Group (*interruption*) and also what many of you have not wanted to hear over many, many a year.

The truth is, Lord Mayor, that Labour in Leeds are divided. They have not got a clue about what to do with a budget situation, a serious budget situation here in Leeds. We have heard the ramblings of the leader of the Labour group, we have heard the emphatic pleas of the Deputy Leaders of the Labour Group, Lord Mayor. They are divided, they are split, they are in turmoil and we all know it, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR COUPAR: Rubbish.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Jonathan Bentley.

COUNCILLOR J BENTLEY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Pantomime is over, I think!

COUNCILLOR: Oh no it isn't!

COUNCILLOR J BENTLEY: I was thinking, Lord Mayor, it has been a long day and I do not want to keep anyone much longer because we have still got Judith's summing up to do yet for God's sake. (*laughter*) I was thinking how many Budget meetings I have sat through and it is only five, I have only been a Councillor just over four years...

COUNCILLOR: Oh, you are lucky.

COUNCILLOR J BENTLEY: I am lucky but already it is Groundhog Day, isn't it? To be quite honest, listening to all the speeches here today I could have been sat in last year's Budget meeting or the year's before.

COUNCILLOR: Absolutely.

COUNCILLOR J BENTLEY: We get the Leader of the Council standing up, as we said before, saying everything that is wrong with it is to do with the Government no matter what the Government is, and everything that is right going on in the city is due to her or his wonderful administration in the past. If everything is so good I just wonder whether she is satisfied with nearly 5% of her Group leaving in this last week. (*laughter*)

We then hear the Conservative Group going through almost line by line a list of amendments going into the minutiae of the budget as if it is going to really change stuff, but we will support the amendments on a number of issues, certainly where we are looking at improving and enhancing local communities' involvement in decision making and keeping the money there and keeping the decision making there.

It is absolutely right that it is seen, the community issues are seen by this administration who say so much about their local communities but it is seen as a source of cutting budgets, an easy way of taking a bit of money back. We will be supporting that.

The one new thing this year, of course, is we have a new Group, the Garforth and Swillington Independents, and I will congratulate Councillor Dobson – he is obviously tweeting somebody about how well his speech went (*laughter*) but I will congratulate Councillor Dobson on his budget speech as the new Leader of the Party. I knew he would be Leader one day but I did not quite know it would be that party (*laughter*) and congratulate Councillor Field particularly on her maiden speech and also I think the courage of what she has done (*applause*) as a new Councillor and obviously the pressure she must have been under. Congratulations and welcome both of you to the Opposition Benches – long may you stay there as we move over *there!* (*laughter*)

COUNCILLOR M DOBSON: Hang on! That's not very nice!

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: Do you think you are going to be as old as Moses? He was 700!

COUNCILLOR J BENTLEY: Just going back to our amendments, as I say this could be a recycled Council meeting and we are very fond of recycling, so we will come up with our big idea, and it is the same big idea as we have every year...

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Until you do it.

COUNCILLOR J BENTLEY: ...until you do it. We do know sometimes you actually do them but we will keep coming up with those. I do not think Stewart actually thanked the officers and management when he spoke and he just whispered to me that he had not done that, so we do want to thank the Finance Team particularly for helping us with our amendment. A lot has been said about Alan Gay already but he really is, I think, one of the saviours of the Council and particularly the way he has done this Minimum Revenue Provision to create £9m of value this year out of the balance sheet and £9m in the coming Budget out of the balance sheet. I think it really

is Leeds' own version of quantitative easing. It is value without real money. I have gone on longer than I thought on that one.

We are just concentrating on two things, as we said already. One is the Social Care aspect that we spoke of and I think on this side of the Chamber we have some agreement on that. I think I would share perhaps Robert's and Mark's view about the failure of the private sector and if we have partnerships I would rather see that being with Community Committees and the voluntary sector.

THE LORD MAYOR: Jonathan, can you wind up, please?

COUNCILLOR J BENTLEY: Just a very quick conclusion. We can deliver our theme, we can deliver the recycling, we can deliver without affecting services so I will leave it at that and support the amendment. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: All right. Thank you. Ann Blackburn.

COUNCILLOR A BLACKBURN: Oh dear, I am very well liked over there, aren't I!

I think I will continue where Councillor Bentley left off with the matter of social care. When I spoke earlier I mentioned about dementia centres and the day centres. I did not mention about the homes. I have mentioned it time and time again, as most people know and yes, going completely into having private homes is not a good thing because they are businesses, they care about money, they care about top ups. I know this because I go to represent my Party to see what they have to say actually on the working group. It is very interesting what they come up with.

One of the things that one of them mentioned was about a person that had been sent to a particular private home, admittedly the home said that they would not take them, they were sent there by mistake by the hospital, but when I asked why they would not take them, they said basically that they had difficulties and they would not fit in well with the people that already resided there.

My concern here is obviously there are people out there that have various difficulties when they get older and so where are they all going to end up? I am assuming they are all going to end up with the few homes that might want complex cases because the big ones do not want them. The big ones obviously all they are bothered about is yes, they might say they are concerned about the residents, though we know a lot do not have the good ratings that our homes have, but also the fact is, as is said at the working group, they keep saying "Top ups, top ups, top ups. Yes, yes, we want more money from the Council and so we want you to pay top ups." What on earth should we do that for? We should be keeping our own homes open.

After I have said all that I will go on to our amendments. David has gone over them but I think putting some money in collapsed gulleys, though I accept with Yorkshire Water on this one, could only help the matter of flooding and in my ward as well we have suffered from flooding with the Farnley and Wortley ring road, so that can only be a good thing.

Environmental projects, more money in those, who is going to argue with that, giving Community Committees more money on environmental projects. I am sure we all want that. Head Start, helping young people to get the skills to get into employment – I would have thought we all wanted that. StreetScene functions, again more money there. Investment in local parks – we know that local parks' budgets have been cut so I would have thought we all wanted that.

Obviously what a lot of you will not want is to pay for them or partly pay for them by reductions, 28 reductions in Special Responsibility Allowance and 9% reductions in basic allowances for Members. Well, really, yes, the fact is we are all saying that we are short of money, we are not getting enough money from the Government but I think we have got to do something as well. As David said, we do not take the full amount, all three of us do not take the full amount that we could get for being Councillors, we never have done. I hear other Councillors here saying the same, in fact they MBIs say that the Special Responsibility Allowance should be cut by 30% so there you are, we are only saying 28% so you can get a reduction there if you vote for us, can't you!

Anyway, I must just throw in about what the Conservatives have put in about mobile libraries. In my ward we do not have a library, we rely on mobile libraries so we will not be supporting that because if we did we would have no libraries covering us at all. (*interruption*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Ann, can you wind up, please.

COUNCILLOR A BLACKBURN: Can I just say, full-time trade union convenors, yes, we want them, we do not want to cut them. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: OK, thank you very much. That is all the speakers. Councillor Judith Blake to sum up.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: I think, against all the odds, I have just become the most popular person in the Chamber! (*laughter*) Do you know what, Andrew Carter – and I have just mentioned his name, this is interesting – he said that normally I and presumably Keith before me started off our Budget speech by speculating on the sweepstake. I started with a personal sweepstake all of my own, just adding up how many times in his speech he referred to me and I have to say not in a positive way at all. Actually, amazingly, despite the impression this year, he actually did more last year – 17 times against 16 times this year. (*interruption*)

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: Working round to ignoring you, Judith.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Do you know, there is one personal attack that I do not think any of us should allow in this Chamber and that is calling Councillor Lyons a dinosaur! (*laughter*)

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: He liked it!

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Apologies, it has been a long afternoon! I do find this impression that you are trying to give of us presenting doom and gloom, I think you should be ashamed of talking down this city and that is what you are doing.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: What?

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: That is what you are doing (*interruption*) all the time. Just get out there. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: Oh dear.

COUNCILLOR: That is fake news.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: I just want to say, Stewart, thank you for supporting parts of our Budget speech, I really do appreciate you and also I can thank you for being consistent, actually. Do you know you are? You have certain issues that you strongly believe in but there is one issue that I am really surprised about, Stewart, and do not quite understand this. I do give applause to David for being on our side in protecting convenors, trade unions and the workforce in this city. (*Applause*) Absolutely crucial. How on earth could we have achieved what we have achieved in this city – and I did not say people, I did not give the impression it was people, I talked about posts, the number of posts we have had to reduce, and every pound spent on trade union facilities time saves between £2 and £5 re the costs of dismissal and exit rates. This is an investment in this city so let's keep going and keep supporting it. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: If you had decent management you wouldn't need it.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Do you know, the whole idea in terms of undermining staff – I do not understand how you think you can implement easily reducing the pay of staff, for example. How on earth are you going to bring that in, particularly if you have got less convenors to work with? If you do not get agreement do you know what you have to do? You have to dismiss the whole workforce and then go through the process of re-engaging them. How irresponsible would that be with our most vulnerable citizens facing the biggest challenges of their lives.

There are several things I just want to pick up on. Actually, in terms of the mobile libraries, for example, £30,000 does not sound a huge amount but actually Ann mentioned it, she has not got a fixed library in her ward. That £30,000 would mean a reduction of 50 stops, meaning about 2,600 fewer visits a year. Which ward is going to volunteer to have less visits from the library going round? It just is not appropriate. We know how important libraries are to our communities.

Listening to the issues about the Community Committees, I know why you are promoting this and the sad thing is not all of the Committees spend their full allocation and guess which one does not? Outer North East only spent 79% of its Wellbeing budget in 2015/16, so I do not think we need any lessons from over there.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Completely untrue. Untrue.

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: Untrue again.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Talk to your Chief Executive. What rubbish

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Do you know what, I hear the same consistency from David, actually, every year attacking Members' allowances, but do you remember we did the biggest consultation of Members talking through what they actually do in our submission to the Boundary Commission and do you know what came out of that? Councillors in Leeds spend on average 177 hours a month, or 40 hours a week, on Council business. Some Members work full-time, we have caring commitments, all sorts of other things. Actually we did not take on an increase at the beginning but I just think we need to be realistic about what is going to bring in the huge amounts of money that we need to invest in.

There has obviously, for obvious reasons, been a lot of discussion about Adult Social Care today and I am very interested, Andrew, in talking to you about new models of provision, I do not have a problem with that at all but I do not understand what you think one and a half million of capital will actually achieve. A 40 bed extra care scheme alone costs between £6.5m and £7.5m and a care home would be roughly similar, so I think for all let's have a conversation and I know there are many people wanting to talk to us, but let us focus on what we can achieve.

The other thing, the impression that is being given that we are withdrawing from all services in this city is absolutely shameful and I will list Dementia Day Centres, BME Day Services, Enablement Services supporting people to recover in their own homes, recovery support, intermediate care in a residential bed, step-up support to avoid an unnecessary admission to hospital, respite care, aids and adaptations including community alarms and other assisted technology through the Shared Lives Services equivalent to an adult foster care service.

Let us be proud and celebrate how much work we have managed to keep in-house and how much support we give to the older people and people with learning difficulties, mental health issues, all of those other areas in Adult Social Care that tend to get forgotten.

We have been given a responsibility. The 2% precept we will be using to mitigate the impact of demographic growth. I read an incredible statistic about in the Second World War up to half of the population died before they were 65. How shocking is that but how that has changed to now and the numbers and the growing numbers of people that will require our care as they grow older. Also, looking at the impact of the National Living Wage.

The other areas that we are going to be looking at, one area that is dear to all of our hearts, developing the quality of care service so that we can liaise with our independent care home sector, driving up standards as we go along. We all want to make sure that we provide the best care in all different facilities in this city.

(Applause)

We will be providing new occupational therapists to assist in hospital discharge – absolutely crucial – and the key area that we know in this city we depend on is protecting Third Sector support for the work that we do in our communities. We have got a pot of money, £1.7m, Transforming Care pot, supporting people with learning disabilities with complex needs to keep them in their own homes or in specialist provision so that we can keep them out of hospital. That is what a caring Council does, a compassionate Council that cares about its most vulnerable citizens.

I heard your offer to lobby Government. You give the impression that we do not do that – we do it all the time. I completely counter that charge that we are not well respected in Whitehall. That is absolute nonsense. Look at the achievements that we have had in many of our services and we have civil servants coming to Leeds asking us to support other Councils around the country. I am happy to continue to lobby with you, Andrew, if you think you can make the breakthrough. The truth is we have, as a result of the referendum, a completely new Government, new people who I have not got a relationship at all with and we are trying to do everything we can to encourage them. Labour Leaders around the country did write to Theresa May after the Surrey incident. Have we heard anything back?

COUNCILLORS: No.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Well, there you go, this is the thing. Nothing comes back at all.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Labour Leaders, there is your point.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: The really important thing we have to do is to focus on the positive things that we are managing to do in the city, working with our partners, bringing £11m extra into Adults' and Children's Services and all of the work we have been doing in Children's, and really investing in our workforce so they can work with us to deliver the services that we have to do.

Leeds is an international city and welcomes world class events but do you know what? The Brownlee boys are brilliant and they stood up and thanked Leeds City Council for bringing the World Triathlon Series to Leeds and enabling them to showcase in front of a home crowd their brilliant talent, and don't you ever suggest that they do not recognise the support that we give them as a city.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: The city, not you and the Labour Group.

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: It is all about you.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: I have not mentioned John Procter – I can hear him over here. I think the thing that a few people said around the Chamber is, I think, John, you have been spending a little bit too much time in Brussels. *(laughter)* We can go and offer support to Brussels on how to cope with you, John, if it is needed. I would be very, very happy to do that.

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: They won't get very far then, will they.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: I just want to finish the Budget debate today by telling you how proud I am to be the Leader of the best Labour Group in the country and I want to thank each and every one of you for what you did.

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: Dearie me.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: The suggestion that we are a divided group split down the middle is just absolute fanciful wishful thinking. We are doing our very best to put our communities first, to get out there, get the message out that we will do everything to be on people's sides.

Strong leadership in our communities, strong leadership in this Chamber, strong leadership from all parts of the city and I include in that, unlike you who keep trying to say "Councillor Blake's budget" all the time, this is an inclusive budget on behalf of the Labour administration in this Council and I am proud of each and every one of you. I move this budget today. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Adam Ogilvie.

COUNCILLOR OGILVIE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 16.4 I call for recorded votes on all amendments and the Budget Motion.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Neil Buckley.

COUNCILLOR BUCKLEY: I second that, Lord Mayor.

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: We have 18 amendments and a Budget Motion or substantive motion to vote on.

(Recorded votes were held on Amendments 1 to 18)

Amendment 1

93 Members were present, 31 voted for, 0 abstentions, 62 voted against. The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 2

93 Members were present, 25 voted for, 6 abstentions, 62 voted against. The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 3

93 Members were present, 17 voted for, 15 abstentions, 61 voted against. The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 4

93 Members were present, 17 voted for, 6 abstentions, 70 voted against. The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 5

93 Members were present, 22 voted for, 0 abstentions, 71 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 6

93 Members were present, 32 voted for, 3 abstentions, 58 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 7

93 Members were present, 33 voted for, 2 abstentions, 58 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 8

93 Members were present, 27 voted for, 0 abstentions, 66 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 9

93 Members were present, 25 voted for, 4 abstentions, 64 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 10

93 Members were present, 24 voted for, 11 abstentions, 58 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 11

93 Members were present, 25 voted for, 10 abstentions, 58 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 12

93 Members were present, 24 voted for, 11 abstentions, 58 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 13

93 Members were present, 8 voted for, 21 abstentions, 64 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 14

93 Members were present, 9 voted for, 26 abstentions, 58 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 15

93 Members were present, 27 voted for, 8 abstentions, 58 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 16

93 Members were present, 7 voted for, 28 abstentions, 58 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 17

93 Members were present, 35 voted for, 0 abstentions, 58 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 18

93 Members were present, 35 voted for, 0 abstentions, 58 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

(A recorded vote was held on the substantive motion)

Budget Motion

93 Members were present, 58 voted for, 33 abstentions, 2 voted against.
The Motion was CARRIED. *(Applause)*

ITEM 11 - MINUTES

THE LORD MAYOR: The Budget has gone beyond 4.45. We have actually run out of time so we need to deal with Item 11 so we will ask the Leader to move that the Minutes be received.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Can I move in terms of the Notice.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Ogilvie.

COUNCILLOR OGILVIE: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Campbell.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Can I move the Reference Back in the terms of the Notice and ask for a recorded vote.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Jonathan Bentley.

COUNCILLOR J BENTLEY: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: We have got a recorded vote on the Reference Back in the name of Councillor Campbell.

*(A recorded vote was held on the Reference Back
in the name of Councillor Campbell)*

THE LORD MAYOR: The amendment in the name of Councillor Campbell, those present 93, those "Yes" 33, abstentions 2, "No" 58. That is LOST.

We have one more motion to receive the Minutes. *(A vote was taken)* That is CARRIED.

Thank you all, that is the end of the meeting.

(The meeting closed at 5.40pm)